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JESUS, BAR RABBA,

OR

JESUS, BAR ABBA?

BY

HENRY PRATT, M.D.

AUTHOR OF "NEW ASPECTS OF LIFE AND RELIGION."

Man comes into the world to live.

Whoso desireth to live rightly, let him, in loving forgetfulness of self, put absolute trust in Infinite Love; for then, under the guiding of conscience, he can safely follow the leading of circumstance.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;

AND

20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1887.

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THE CHRIST-IDEA.

THE Christ-idea reaches far back in the traditional and mythical history of the evolution of man. Its origin is lost in the mystery of the ages. Its precursor was the ideal fall of man ; which, again, was associated with and attributed to the acquired knowledge of good and evil, whose presence was everywhere recognized and painfully realized.

Of the traditional fall there existed a three-fold version.

According to the earliest assumption, it was due to the yielding of the first parents of the human race to the seductive temptations of spirit, and was the passing of the natural under the dominion of the spiritual.

Then those who had passed under the dominion of spirit declared that what had hitherto been regarded as a fall was the original descent of spirit into matter, through which it had become the victim of desire.

While those who could take in neither of these views came to believe that it had originated in and

was a yielding to a natural appetite, figured as a forbidden fruit : an indulgence which, useful and necessary to the animal kingdom, was undesirable in man.

The original idea of the fall of man grew out of a recognition of the struggle going on within himself between the natural and the spiritual.

Man is a natural being at the head of the animated order of nature. His origin was natural, and he is called by nature to lead a natural life ; cannot, indeed, avoid doing so, as, however much he may seek to limit the cravings of nature, he must submit to some of her requirements or cease to live. Obeying this call causes him to develop the natural side of his being in accordance with the intention of nature, through which the desire of the otherwise unknown Author of his being naturally expresses itself.

From this natural way of progression, man was tempted by spirit, and, submitting to its guidance under the impression that in listening to its insidious suggestions he was hearkening to the voice of God, learnt to condemn the natural and strive to develop the spiritual side of his being ; and thus was the struggle between the natural and the spiritual introduced.

Succeeding in developing the spiritual side of his being, and, by so doing, acquiring a conviction of

the truth of the spirit teachings to which he had succumbed, he, as was to be expected, sought for a reason for the faith that was in him—for a reason understandable of all, and therefore scientific—that he might establish the teaching he had been led up to on a firm basis.

As a result of these researches, he was induced to believe that, under some inexplicable impulse and for some mysterious reason, spirit had descended from its high estate into matter; and that the human body had become to it a prison-house, materialized in which it was subjected to degraded appetites and degrading desires. And then, accepting this conclusion, he affirmed that the aim of right-minded man should be to strive to hasten his expected and longed-for return to his original spirit state, by struggling with and overcoming natural impulse and natural appetite, because only by so doing can his spirit disentangle itself from the material bonds which hold it, and thus obtain the deliverance for which it so ardently aspires. And this was the spiritual view of the fall.

Few, however, were they who could comprehend, who could accept, this doctrine. Hence it gradually assumed the character of an occult science, though even so it has never failed to exercise a powerful influence on the spiritual development of man.

In one regard, however, its success was complete. It effectually overcame and blotted out the natural view of the fall ; and, where it could not enforce its own teaching, promoted the acceptance of the mythical view, as at least suggesting the necessity for subduing natural appetite.

This suggested necessity introduced the struggle between the natural and the spiritual, and inaugurated and developed the double nature of man ; for the spiritual is a supernatural graft worked on to a natural stock.

In this struggle between the spiritual and the natural, the difficulties encountered by the spirit of man were so great, and the reactions of nature so violent, that it came to be regarded as a contest between good and evil in the individual—a contest in which the preponderance of strength lay on the side of evil ; and then, as the unaided spiritual was found to be carrying on an unequal conflict, a need for aid from without was felt by the spirit of man.

Under the pressure of this thus realized need, the aid of spirit was invited, was expected, and was, in due course, received, in answer to this appeal—for the appeal was suggested by itself, that it might have a direct opening for the promotion of the line of development it desired to produce.

But this appeal for the aid, this expectancy, this

reception of the spirit, comprised in its entirety the Christ-idea ; for the Christ-idea is, that the spirit of Christ overshadows the aspiring and unites with the developing spirit of man, in order to conform it to the spirit ideal, and thus recall it to and re-unite it with its absolute and infinite Source.

Those who hold such views maintain that the Christ-principle is the mystical basis of mythical religion ; and that the successive Christs embodied in the history of the world, under whatever designations they may have appeared or been handed down, were but representative impersonations of the Christ-spirit whereby the Christ-idea was brought down to the knowledge and needs of the age to which each respectively was manifested.

The Christ-idea probably originated in the East, but the earliest portrayed record of its personalization was found in Egypt, where, on the innermost walls of the Holy of Holies in the temple of Luxor, consecutive designs have been discovered representing the annunciation, conception, birth and adoration of the mystical child-messiah, born of the mythical virgin-mother, which might easily be mistaken for representations of analogous scenes in the gospel-history of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is true the child thus represented as having been announced, incarnated, born and worshipped,

symbolized an Egyptian solar god. But the Christ-idea has been associated from time immemorial with the sun in its course through the Zodiacal signs. Indeed, it has even been supposed, affirmed and maintained, that all the constellations have been named and their respective signs chosen to record the Christ-history of the human race, and the application of the Christ-principle to individual man ; and in this way the doctrine of spirit evolution has been assumed to have been announced in the heavens.

However attractive such a doctrine may be, it has the fatal defects—that the stars, whether taken singly or in their groupings, are not doctrinal symbolizers ; that their respective observed positions, outside the solar system, neither signify nor express any mutual relations that may exist between them ; that the very names by which they are known, with the signs by which they are indicated, have no reference to anything proper to themselves, but were given to them by unknown observers for unrecorded reasons ; and that the meanings of these names and signs have been long lost.

Hence, even if these meanings were recoverable and the doctrine imputed through them made clear, that doctrine can only be attributed to the stars through the signs ; and all the constellations can do

in the way of communicating the same is, remind the instructed observer of the name and sign by which each has come to be recognized, that the imputed doctrine may be disclosed through these.

That the stars themselves are wholly innocent of any power of revealing or even of reproducing doctrine is shown by the fact that to the uninstructed they only impart a sense of wonder, of admiration, of awe ; while their sole teaching to the continuous and thoughtful observer is drawn through the changing relations of the greater to the lesser luminaries and planetary bodies and to each other—all of which, so far from giving a direct teaching, are absolutely misleading until interpreted by an acute and sound reasoning judgment.

Hence the Christ of the celestial signs is neither historical nor spiritual, but mythical ; while the attribution of the Christ-idea to the symbolism of the stars is an evident after-thought, applied to the re-interpretation of the symbolical constellations when their scientific and historic meaning had been lost. It is highly probable that in the first instance each sign was intended to indicate the character of the season when it was in the ascendant, and over which it consequently presided, at the period of its attribution—the agricultural and other occupations proper thereunto, with the liabilities accruing thereupon ;

and that the signs of the constellations on either side of, and therefore associated with, the respective Zodiacal signs represented conditions and circumstances which qualify and modify the instructions of these.

The de-naturalization and spiritualization of the signs of the constellations, after their true meaning had been lost, was quickly followed by the deification and worship of their images, whether as deified emblems or actual deities associated with the heavenly bodies. And much of the idolatry of the world originated in this way, nature worship becoming intimately associated therewith.

The wide diffusion and persistency of the Christ-idea, and its revival and renewing from time to time, are due to spirit intervention and spirit suggestion; for spirit is the great promoter of the spiritual advance of man. But spirit does not limit its workings to the realization and application of the Christ-idea, as is learnt from the progress of Buddhism; for though the traditional birth of Gautama Buddha was as that of a Christ, and though the supreme wisdom is said to have linked itself with his personality, or rather to have absorbed that personality into and assimilated it with itself when he became a Buddha, he carefully eliminated the Christ-idea from his teachings, and, instead of

requiring a union of the Christ-spirit with the spirit of man to save the individual from the consequences of previous self-indulgence, which were unavoidable, and free him from the entanglements of natural desire, he declared that each must be his own saviour and deliver himself by his own efforts from self, its self-seeking desires and surroundings, and the effects of its previous selfish life. And this is the distinguishing mark between Buddhism and Christianity ; for these are incompatible systems. They are, indeed, when considered as systems, diametrically opposed each to the other, however much doctrinal accord may otherwise exist between them ; for mediation, which is vital to Christianity, is absolutely rejected by Buddhism.

The association of the personal humanity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Christ-idea has led to almost insuperable historic and other difficulties, and made it hardly possible to identify the actual Jesus as an historical personage.

This identification was evidently not desired by the authors of the association, for the strength of their position was the obscurity in which the life of him of whom they had made an ideal Messiah was plunged. Hence they promoted the loss of every vestige of the true life of the real Jesus.

Owing to this, when a spirit of inquiry was aroused

later and traces of this life were eagerly sought for, the only Jesus of whom the Jewish records could give any information at all in accord with the traditional life was Jesus ben Pandira, a disciple of Jesus ben Perachia, who, with his master, fled into Egypt from a persecution of the Rabbis.

But this happened more than a century before the commencement of the Christian era, and, though Jesus ben Pandira was stoned as a wizard and then hanged upon a tree on the eve of the Passover, the Jewish authorities agree in affirming that he was not the Jesus of the Christians.

Hence the opinion has been adopted by some that Jesus of Nazareth is a mythical personage who never existed in the flesh.

But the reason why no traces of the Jesus of the Gospels have been found in history is, *that they have been looked for in the wrong direction and under a wrong name.*

If the actual Jesus, instead of being of the house of David and tribe of Judah, was of an unidentified family of the tribe of Asher ; and if the name, Jesus, accrued to him during and with reference to his mission life, and was not the patronymic designation given to him by his father, it is evident that to search for his genealogy under a name by which he was not known to the scribes, and in the records of

a family and tribe to which he did not belong, was to ensure failure in the end sought, and that such a search must be almost necessarily followed by the results gained.

Those who doubt that the Jesus of the Gospels was an actual personage should carefully consider the two-fold lesson of gospel history, and ponder over the remarkable antagonism between the admitted teachings of Jesus and the attributed doctrines of Christ.

The antagonism here is very suggestive.

Why should an ideal Jesus have been imaginatively invented, to be thereupon merged in a mythical Christ?

Why should the idealized teaching of this ideal Jesus be blended with the attributed doctrines of the mythical Christ, so as to cause the one to be absorbed in and supplanted by the other—this, be it observed, by the promoters and diffusers of the Christ-idea—unless an actual Jesus had been well known to have existed, and to have been the leader and guide of actual followers, familiar with his actual teachings, whom it had been found necessary or advisable to messianize while subverting his remembered utterances?

Why should the familiar name of this never-to-be-forgotten Jesus have been combined with that of a

mythical Christ, his teachings have been conformed to and confounded with those of his proposed supplanter, with whom he was to be identified as Jesus Christ, unless it had been discovered, in carrying out this messianizing design, that the personality of Jesus had so impressed his followers that it was impossible to obliterate the memory thereof in any other way?

It is in the careful consideration of these facts that the evidence of the actuality of the humanity of Jesus is found; and the indisputable character and weight of this evidence will some day be admitted. But even granting that the Gospels in their present shape only deal with an impersonation of the Christ-idea, the inquirer will still find himself face to face with the insuperable difficulty that the idealized teaching of an ideal personage has been blended with an opposed and opposing teaching attributed to the same personage, under another name and in a different state, which has completely supplanted the idealized teaching, and subordinated it to the Christ-idea embodied in the mythical Christ; for then the admission of such a teaching in a disguised form into the Christian archives, merely that it may be supplanted and suppressed, has to be accounted for.

In any case, the presence of this double teaching

is a fact which is at length assuming its true proportions, and it is more difficult to accept the view that it originated in the blending of the characteristics of an unreal Jesus with the attributes of a mythical Christ, than to see in it the merging of the memory of a divine humanity in the tradition of its spirit supplanter.

Under either aspect there must have been a very weighty motive for the invention of such a combination.

What can this veiled motive have been, unless to mystify the followers of one who had been their actual leader, with a view to transforming and supplanting his remembered teaching?

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE SUPPLANTERS OF PRIMITIVE SCIENCE.

It is the boast of science that by the study of a part it can acquire or recover a knowledge of the whole.

It has been recorded of the renowned anatomist, Cuvier, that from the fragment of a bone, submitted to his observation, he constructed an exact similitude of the representative of the long-extinct species to which the subject of his investigations had belonged.

It is related of the illustrious linguist, Cardinal Mezzofanti, that a personage having been presented at the Papal court whose language was wholly unknown to him, after considering some of the elements of that language for a few hours, he so completely re-constructed it as to be able on the

following day to converse with ease in his own tongue with him whose native speech it was.

It is the triumph of science that nothing is beyond the scope of its inquiry or can long resist the persistency of its research.

The cuneiform and other inscriptions of the ancients, whose memorial records have so long remained a mystery to the moderns, are having their silent utterances restored to, their hidden secrets wrung from, them.

The once famous cities of the past, for ages entombed and even in some cases come to be regarded as mythical, are, in response to careful research under the guidance of a waning and scarcely credited tradition, one by one giving up their long-buried treasures to the wondering eyes of a not too credulous world.

It is the glory of science that these discoveries have become possible through an instrumentality of its own patient and almost unconscious devising, derived as it was from the extension, development and maturation of its growing methods; for the division and subdivision of labour in every sphere of investigation have gradually introduced a specialization of research which has made of each branch of study an independent subject of inquiry.

It would almost seem as if every object of interest

to man had been made the subject of his especial notice ; and, with certain reserves, it might even be granted that such is the case.

But there is a branch of study which, if it has not been neglected from one point of view, leaves much to be desired under another.

The reputed sacred writings of successive teachers of mankind, underlying as they do the correlated religions of the world, have been in all ages the subjects of a wide-spread interest.

This interest has caused them to be minutely studied. But owing to the vicissitudes through which they have passed—with those under whose keeping they have been transmitted—they have for the most part come to be misread and misunderstood, and their intended teaching to be lost sight of and supplanted.

This is perhaps not surprising of ancient scriptures. These have, for the most part, passed through the hands of interpreters ignorant of the language in which they were written ; and this language having been treated by these interpreters as a dead language, their meaning has been sought through verbal analysis and comparison, and by the application of linguistic principles which are powerless as regards the recovery of idiomatic usages of speech and the discovery of the conventional meaning of the figurative language of the writers.

The mistake made by the scientific inquirer here is, that he does not carry his researches far enough back. He takes an accepted basis for granted. This basis is, the received traditional reading of the scriptures he is investigating.

Were he to make each of these scriptures the subject of a special inquiry, irrespective of the traditional reading imputed thereunto; were he to search for the idiomatic usages of the people for whom they were written, and for the sense in which these would have understood the figures of speech of their writers, and then to study them through the knowledge thus acquired,—he might possibly be surprised at the results he would obtain.

The fact is, that such inquiries cannot be pushed too far back.

The inquirer is dealing with what have for him the force of primitive languages.

He is therefore bound to consider and take into account the principles which underlie the formation of all language.

Speech is natural in its origin, conventional in its use.

A speechless man—that is, a man in the full possession of his faculties, but having no language—seems an impossible being in the present day.

Such a being, however, must, under any natural

view of origination, have been possible once, since speech, like man himself, must have had a beginning.

Such a man, a primeval Adam with his primeval Eve, would commence his vocal expressions by impulsive ejaculations ; by uttering exclamations—of wonder, of pleasure, of pain, of dread, as the case might be—at the sight of each successive object that impressed his imagination.

Every such exclamation, repeated each time the object which called it forth was observed, would become and be conventionally accepted as the name of that object.

Then these conventionally accepted names would come to be used to represent the observed and recognized qualities of the object each had originally designated, apart from that object itself ; and they would be so used to idealize the imputed qualities, with a view to applying them to the description of other and even dissimilar objects in which similar qualities had been noticed, or to which it was possible to attribute the same.

Finally, characteristic modifications would be conventionally imparted to these several root words, and they would thus be made the basis of the successive parts of speech, and of the different combinations and inflections to which these were subjected by use.

Such a development of speech would have taken place as a simple natural evolution or growth, and been the result of a continuous usage spread over a prolonged period of time.

And every so developed language, remaining more or less under the influence of the successive causes of its development, would be liable to and continuously undergoing dialectic change through the constant operation of the developing influences.

Studied from such a point of view, the relations of the roots of words to the several words in which they are found, and to the successive parts of speech in which they are reproduced and inflected, become at once intelligible and highly significant.

The reason why the same radicle often conveys dissimilar and even contradictory meanings becomes also apparent. For these originally represented the several characteristics of the objects which had called them forth. These were very varied and often contradictory. Hence when they became the roots of words expressing qualifying ideas, these upon occasion often conveyed very different ideal significances.

A natural origin of language, as coeval with and a vocal reflection of the natural origin of knowledge, is inseparable from a natural origin of man.

Its calling forth is the expression of a want in his

being ; a desire to impart to another impressions produced on and knowledge acquired by himself.

But, though the origin of language is as natural as are the sources of the knowledge that language is devised to communicate, the development of language is a conventional process, which follows closely on the lines of the advance in knowledge, the progress in which it is used to perpetuate and transmit.

This development in each case accompanies while aiding the advance in intelligence of the developers.

Hence a developing language has two modes of expressing itself.

It divides into a vulgar tongue or speech of daily life, and a language of literature and science.

In this the principle of division is again illustrated ; is again illustrated in the same way, as following the lead of an advancing intelligence.

Thus nature is seen to be the fountain-head and source of every form of advance.

Man, viewed as the product of creation by selective evolution, is the outcome of the activity of nature, conjointly with and following closely in the footsteps of his natural surroundings.

The knowledge of man has its roots firmly planted in the observation of nature.

The language of man is the result of a natural

effort to give expression to that knowledge, that he may be enabled to impart to others what he has acquired by observation, and at the same time develop his own reasoning powers by mentally considering the relations of the known to the possible.

Science, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, are different ways of advancing and applying the knowledge of man, and using it practically for the benefit of the individual and of the race.

Hence science and religion are intimately correlated.

They are, in fact, the two branches of a primary division of the advancing stream of knowledge, through which the advocates of the one seek to promote his physical, those of the other his spiritual well-being.

But even under this formal division, while science pursues its course irrespective of religion, and makes everything that can be submitted to its processes the subject of its investigations, religion so far depends upon science that it cannot remain persistently in antagonism therewith. The views of Galileo were condemned, and rejected for a time ; but they had to be accepted. The views of Darwin were hostilely received ; but their soundness is being gradually admitted.

Religion professes to give man certain knowledge,

absolute certitude on the subjects concerning which he is most deeply interested ; and to teach him how to live so as to gain the greatest benefit from that knowledge.

A similar claim is advanced by science.

But science extends the range of its inquiries in every direction without limitation, affirming that all knowledge is good in and of itself, and can only be made evil by the use to which it may be put.

Whereas religion divides all knowledge into two classes, which it terms respectively sacred and profane, and embraces in this division the distinction it draws between what it designates as the knowledge of good and evil.

Thus while knowledge is the basis of science, the knowledge of good and evil is the basis of religion.

Hence religion claims the right of defining what is good and what is evil in and of itself, and thus indirectly arrogates to itself the power of arresting the progress of science ; and by asserting this power has caused an antagonism between science and itself which has put a barrier against accepting the received results of scientific investigation as so many steps in advance on the road towards the truth.

And yet, if absolute truth should be ever reached by man in his present relations, this will be the fruitful result of scientific research.

There is reason to believe that a greater measure of absolute truth was at one time embodied in the store of the knowledge of man than is at present found there.

Traces of a primeval science are not wanting in the sacred scriptures of the ancients ; and the fact of the embodiment of fragmentary scientific dogmas in these writings shows that the science they were intended to transmit was then held to underlie the religious teachings of the world.

But, if so, at that epoch religion and science must have been one.

There is reason to suppose that a time arrived in the progress of the development of the human mind when a double import was given to this primitive science ; when a second and, as was imagined, higher significance was imputed to its doctrine, and preferred to its original teaching.

This took place when it came to be regarded by some under a mystical aspect, apart from its natural bearing and relations.

The attribution of this double import marks the specialization of religion, its separation from its scientific source, and the commencement of that division between religion and science which has prevented their real and permanent re-union.

The natural teaching of primitive science, in its

attempts to give a meaning to the life of man and raise it from the insignificance which might otherwise seem to attach thereto, was that *either* a soul *or* a spirit passed from each human being at death, to enter the soul *or* the spirit state, as the case might be.

Hence it attached great importance to the difference between the soul and the spirit, and between the soul state and the spirit state, to which either of these was respectively passing; and carefully distinguished the one from the other.

Its teaching was, that the being under creation in man had one of two possible issues to his actual life.

That he might pass therefrom as an organized being or living soul, in which the natural evolution whereof he has been the outcome gains its completeness.

That failing this, he would depart therefrom as a simple spirit, destitute of form and organization.

And it affirmed that the uses each individual made of its passing life determined into which of these states it would enter at death, by fitting it for the one or the other. For only those who by their lives prepared themselves for the soul state could be submitted to the process of regeneration by which the self is converted into the soul.

In the course of time this distinction came to be lost sight of. The soul and the spirit were confused together in the self. The natural use of the life, under which evolution was completed or dissolution rendered necessary, was passed over as associated with and more or less due to a misrepresented traditional fall. And then a spiritualizing aim was set before man as the incentive to leading a spiritual in contradistinction to a natural life.

This confusion was at once the cause and consequence of religious teaching.

In this way a second science was evolved from, a double science constituted of the single original, primitive science.

Of these, the one treated of the evolution of soul, while the other dealt with the involution and devolution of spirit.

Of these, the one was the science of regeneration, whereas the other was the science of degeneration.

Of these, the one was the science of soul, and the other the science of spirit.

But the science of spirit was prone to borrow the terms and adapt the teachings of the science of soul, and by so doing further complicated the confusion it had originated.

This double science has leavened the world ever since.

The science of spirit, in occult form, has retained its hold over the mystical minds of the East, to which it owes its birth.

The science of soul, under a more or less disguised aspect, has been the standpoint of the more practical minds of the West, with which it has become intimately associated.

These sciences, once divided, have continued asunder ever since. Each has pursued its own independent course. Each has developed under the leading of the circumstances to whose influence it is continuously submitted. Each has been modified by the life-impulses of those through whom its teachings have been successively transmitted.

The science thus undergoing a double evolution, conformed to the minds of its respective fosterers, has been itself completely lost sight of in its supplanting descendants.

Hence it has had an occult character attributed to it, and has actually undergone a double occultation—an occultation in each instance responding to the intellectual bent of its cultivators.

These supplanting sciences had this much in common, that each struggled after the spiritual as opposed to the natural development of its votaries.

This was the quicksand in which their parent, the science of nature, had suffered shipwreck and been

submerged ; the quicksand to whose shifting beds each, in its own way, owed its origin.

But, though each of these sciences was actuated by spirit impulses, which gave it spiritual tendencies and set before its disciples spiritual aims, the occult science of the East, even when not recognized as such, was a genuine science of spirit, while the occulted science of the West was a corrupted science of soul.

Hence the distinction in fundamental principle between them was this, that the science of the East shrank from every form of anthropomorphism, whereas the science of the West made anthropomorphic views the basis of its cult. And it is the recognition of this distinguishing mark that enables the inquirer unhesitatingly to define the true character and actual scope of either.

Their aims, however, were identical, although the methods by which they sought to attain these were dissimilar.

The primitive science, which was the science of nature and the true science of the soul, recognized that the control of appetite must be the basis of the life uses of man.

It affirmed that this control was necessary, that the due regeneration of the self might take place, and the generation of the soul be accomplished.

It taught that a self-forgetting love was the instrumentality through which the needed control was to be gained.

The Eastern evolution of this science taught that man was to do battle with appetite by energizing a strong resisting will, through which it was to be overcome and ultimately cast out.

But to do this was to antagonize and oppose the workings of nature.

The Western evolution of this science taught that faith was to take the place of self-forgetfulness. Under its view, appetite was disregarded. Its ravages, treated as sins, were assumed to have been atoned for by the genuineness of the faith in their atonement.

But to trust to this was to leave the self unguardedly exposed to the seductions of appetite, whose unrestrained workings in man are opposed to the workings of nature.

Thus the true science of nature, the science of control, was converted, on the one hand, into a science of antagonism, the science of the will ; and, on the other, into a science of surrender, the science of faith, with intermediate and interblended developments.

The science of the soul has been lost sight of and forgotten.

Its view was that man was sent into the world to live.

That living, he was to seek happiness.

That seeking happiness, he was to endeavour to make happy that he might be happy.

That seeking to be, making and being happy, involved a measure of self-seeking and of the indulgence of self.

But then perceiving that a self-seeking indulgence of appetite brought unhappiness, misery and evil in its train, it formulated the further view, that appetite must be led, through desire, into a self-forgetting love. And it laid stress upon this necessity because it realized that through self-forgetful love alone could the needed control be gained over the indulgence of the affections.

Beyond this, it recognized that the scope of man's knowledge was bounded by the limits of his natural surroundings.

But it could not close its perceptions to the fact that the existence of these surroundings involved and testified to the existence of an unknown something beyond them, in which they existed and on which they depended.

This unknown something was regarded by it as an unknown provider, an unknown providence, the unknowable sustainer of all things.

This unknowable sustainer it defined as infinite impersonal being.

In this infinite impersonal being it urged its votaries to place absolute trust; pointed out to them that they were called to do this by the circumstances of their lives; invited them to rely on its infinite love; and taught them to hope that their own aspirations would be fulfilled by their passing after death to a state in which the full measure of their own love would be attained through this infinite love.

Then by a process of logical reasoning pushing its conclusions still further, it was impelled to admit the view that the impersonal being on which all depends, actuated by infinite love, is seeking impersonation through the instrumentality of man, that by this impersonation it may acquire personal organs, through which to give full expression to its affections. And that it produces these organs by a functional action in its own being, in virtue of which unnumbered rudimentary selves are passed through a series of living forms in a progressive order, which culminates in man.

Hence it taught that these organs, the living human souls, were the beings under creation from the beginning of the world.

But it also taught that the conversion of these

progressing selves into the living and loving organs under creation was conditional ; that it depended on the uses each made of its human life.

Hence it affirmed that only such human beings as led duly qualifying lives, only such human beings as lived so as to fit themselves to be transformed into organs of infinite love, became matrices in which souls were generated ; that the soul was generated during, and conformed to, the life uses of the individual ; that through those in whom a soul was generated, the true meaning of life was found, the actual aim of creation attained, the real end of nature gained ; and that in all others the human spirit, having failed to fit itself for the uses of infinite love, had simply qualified itself for ultimate dissolution—a dissolution in which the evolved self disappeared, as the spirit re-passed to and merged its individuality in the infinite being from which it had originally proceeded.

In these propositions it embraced the complete science of soul and of spirit.

Its view of the whole question was, that what proceeded from infinite being to constitute the known—that is, the natural order of things visible—was bound to return to infinite being at the close of its evolutionary career.

But then it affirmed that this return could be

effected in one of two ways. For it held that the evolved self was either matured, so as to pass to the infinite as a living soul, or, losing its separate being, was resumed by the infinite in such fashion as that its very individuality vanished.

Thus the science of soul comprised the science of spirit, but did not dwell thereon further than to remind its disciples that the alternative of continuous life or final death is placed before each by his terrestrial existence.

Whereas the science of spirit completely ignored the science of soul.

To it the soul was but an envelope of spirit, to be shaken off and abandoned in due time.

According to it, the rudimentary self proceeded from infinite being at the outset of the present kosmical evolution.

This rudimentary self it held to have been formed by a temporary union of spirit with matter, or, as it termed it, the descent of spirit thereinto—a descent which it even likened to a species of fall.

This rudimentary self, so formed, was sent forth from infinite being to pass through a practically countless series of successive transitory existences.

This passage was to be spread over a vast period of time.

This period of time was divisible into well-marked

revolutions, with distinct astronomical and other relations.

Each of these revolutions was characterized by a particular relation, tendency or state of the selves subjected thereunto.

This particular relation, tendency or state, had many aspects, and comprised many varying manifestations, until the highest condition attainable therein was gained by all the selves passing through it.

Hence each of these revolutions was divisible into many courses of successive lives.

And hence it occasionally happened that an individual here and there of the progressing selves outstripped its comrades in these courses, so as even to attain the state proper to the next revolution into which all were to enter ; and these constituted a higher order than those with which they were commingled—the order of the leaders of men.

In pursuing its evolutionary career, the self enters each succeeding life by process of generation.

Commencing that life, it passes the same in accordance with its own will and pleasure, as far as circumstances permit.

Terminating that life, it falls into an hypnotic state, into a dream-world of illusions, whose character is derived from the character of the life of which it is the outcome and complement.

Nor did the influence of the character of that life cease here. It became a fate, so to say, to the progressing self, and determined absolutely the tendency and controlled the course of the next succeeding existence.

Under and owing to this influence, the self which had done rightly and loved mercy, which had led a good life, was inclined to lead a better ; while the self which had done wrongly and been merciless, which had led a bad life, was prone to lead a worse. And each was led in this way to the next succeeding existence for which it had prepared and fitted itself.

The progress of the improving self was thus a progress upwards or in goodness, and an advance in that which the influence of goodness produces on the self—which this science interprets as a gradual disentanglement from the delusions and freeing from the attractions of matter and things material. Whereas the course of the disimproving self was downwards, in an increasing materialization and degradation.

When this downward course was in progress, there was, according to this science, but one force which could arrest it—a strong effort of the will to that intent, energetically acted upon throughout a passing life.

By such an exercise of the will, it held, the down-

ward current could be stemmed, and an upward course originated ; and it maintained that such an upward course persevered in would gradually overcome and cast out any surviving tendency to degradation, and so convert the hitherto disimproving into an improving self.

The degrading process it defined as a strengthening of the hold of the material on the spiritual.

The improving process it declared to be the weakening of the hold of matter on spirit.

This weakening or strengthening of the bonds which maintain the union of spirit with matter in the self, it attributed to the resisting on the one part or yielding on the other to the attractions of sense.

Hence it required of its votaries the rejection of the allurements of sense, with a view to the final severance of the union between spirit and matter.

And since the severance of this union meant the dissolution of the self, it made the promotion of this the aim of its teaching.

And with a view to this, it urged the individual self to energize a strong will, through the exercise of which to overcome all sense impulses.

Thus the sum of the teaching of this science was the opposing and antagonizing of nature, with a view to the speedy dissolution of the self.

And so this science, whatever it might be sup-

posed to be, was the science of dissolution, the science of disembodiment, the science of despair. It taught that death was to be anticipated in the senses, and that final death was to be earnestly desired as the end and aim of life.

This was to be the close of the active career of spirit—final death and absorption in the infinite.

The meaning of this career of spirit, from infinite being, through a transitory materialized individuality and personality, back to infinite being once more, this science did not pause to consider and explain.

It taught that the aim of each advancing self should be to hasten, that is to cut short, this career, in order to return as speedily as possible to the infinite being from which it had proceeded.

Thus a prolongation of transitory life was, in its judgment, a decided disadvantage.

It affirmed of this close of the career of selfhood, that just as the waters of a river mingle with and lose themselves in the waters of the sea towards which they flow, and just as a drop of rain is swallowed up by and disappears in the waters of the ocean on which it falls, so is the vanishing self absorbed by and merged in the infinite being to which it thus at length returns.

But according to this view, the relations of the

transitory self to infinite being, on its return thereto, however and in whatever state that return may be effected, are analogous to the relations of elementary organic cells to the organized being in whose organism they have been incorporated.

The teaching of the science of spirit in regard to the natural order of things visible was, that all the workings of nature are illusory ; all the objects thereof illusions.

It affirmed that the only real, the only trustworthy, the only true, was the subjective freed from the illusions of sense.

In advancing this teaching, it failed to give due weight to the fact that the self could only effect its delivery from the toils and delusions of nature by a formal suicide in mid career, whether of the self or the senses, whether of a passing life by a self-inflicted virtual death, or the cutting off of the remaining series of transitory lives by the sustained action of an energizing will ; and that any such shortening of its career deprives the self of the influence a full experience would have exercised, the effects that would have been produced thereby, on it, and would proportionately have weakened the energy it brought with it on its return to the infinite being from which it had proceeded.

Beyond this, it did not sufficiently ponder the

further fact that the so-styled illusions of nature, whether as actual or imagined realities, are necessary to and the great influencers of life ; so that if they are illusions, then is life itself an illusion, the transitory self the illusion of illusions. And this indeed is the necessary outcome of its teaching.

But indeed, rightly viewed, the science of spirit did not limit its theory of illusions to the objective world. It extended it, perhaps unwittingly, to the subjective world also ; for it taught that the interval between any two succeeding transitory lives of the personified self was passed by the disembodied self in a, so to say, hypnotic state ; a state in which it was the subject of illusions, even to the extent of believing itself to be in the continuous enjoyment of happiness in communion with those who had been dear to it in its last embodied life. And these illusions must, from the necessity of the case, have been subjective.

This theory of illusions under any circumstances was a two-edged sword ; so that when its advocates claimed that they, or some of them, by energizing the powers of the will and deadening the allurements of sense, acquired a faculty of temporarily leaving their bodies and visiting and surveying the entire universe, and gathering up a knowledge of its workings in their minutest details, they could hardly

assure themselves, and could have no means of convincing others, that they were not themselves the victims of illusion.

Such was the mystical science of the East, the actual science of spirit.

It was an illusory science, a science as illusory as spirit, of whose manifestations it treats.

As an illusory science, it accepted the teachings of illusion, and then imposed these on its votaries, who, under its guidance, allowed themselves to be blinded to the fact that, if there is no truth in nature, there can be no truth in the world.

The comparatively recent science, which draws no distinction between soul and spirit, and substitutes self-seeking faith for self-forgetting loving trust, is too full of inconsistencies to deserve the name.

It attributes the origin of man to some unscientific and non-natural process, which it regards as an original and arbitrary fictile creative act of God, whom it likens to a potter fashioning a vessel out of moistened earth or clay ; and affirms a resurrection of the dead under which the self is to rise again in a body that is and is not the body in which it passed its earth life.

A perfect science of the life of man, such as was the primitive science of nature, requires that its disciples should be actuated by the desire to do right.

Those so actuated it urges to put an absolute trust in the boundless love of the infinite being from which their own being has proceeded, and to which they look forward to an ultimate return.

To these it says, If you pass your lives in a loving forgetfulness of self under the guiding of conscience, you can safely follow the leading of circumstance.

But then it is constrained to admit that only the few are capable of such a life.

Hence it bases its teaching on the fundamental principle, that *though all are in God, God is not in all.*

PROLOGUE.

PROLOGUE.

THE PARENTAGE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE tendency of teaching is to the development of doctrine.

The tendency of the agents of doctrinal development is to claim the authority of teachers who have gone before.

To do this, they assert that their developments were held by the teachers whose authority they need.

That these withheld all but the germs of the doctrine they are advancing from their writings.

That they even left these germs in a veiled form, for oral expansion by traditionally instructed teachers.

And that their advancing doctrine is but the traditional expansion or progressive unfolding and

revealing of this veiled teaching, as the time for its divulgence arrives.

The Hebrew sacred scriptures have been the subject of such a treatment.

The processes by which doctrinal expansion was applied to these scriptures, during and after the Babylonian captivity, were well devised.

The Jewish teachers anterior to that period were ignorant of the superhuman view of the Messianic doctrine.

Brought into contact during their captivity with those who expected the incarnation of the divine Word, and fascinated by the perception that this expectation was the spiritualized complement of their own anticipations, they eagerly adopted it, with the teachings on which it depended and the doctrines flowing from it ; and then sought support for these in a re-interpretation of their scriptures.

The Masoretes gained their end by changing the form of all, and the alphabetic value of some, of its Hebrew letters, and by vocalizing and re-vocalizing a vowel-less text ; the Targumists, by paraphrasing the same ; and their respective successors, by various other ingenious devices—each of the opposing schools of thought carrying out its own views in its own way. Thus all skilfully worked the grafts of their growing doctrines, one after another, on to the

original scripture stock, apparently unconscious that the processes they so successfully used were falsifying ones ; and that, instead of expanding the meaning of their scriptures in a legitimate manner by applying them, they were simply supplanting the teaching while usurping the authority of the teacher.

The relations of Judaism to Christianity, on the one hand, and of Buddhism to Christianity, on the other, suggest that analogous influences and processes culminated in the evolution of the Christian religion as an offshoot of these respective relative stems. And then the earlier relations of Judaism, the recognized parent of Christianity, with Buddhism, its unrecognized parent, through those who re-interpreted the Jewish scriptures in accordance with Eastern views, more than suggests the means by which the development of Christianity was accomplished.

However this may have been, the concurrent testimony of the Chinese and Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures shows that there was in the East a general expectation of the *Tathagatha*—the “He that cometh” of the Buddhist ; the “Anointed” or Kung Teng of the Chinese ; the Messiah of the Jews ; and the Christ of the Christians—the *O Erchomenos*, during a period which anticipated, covered and followed the Babylonian captivity.

This common expectation was :

That the Divine Wisdom would come down from heaven.

That it would be born in the flesh, in the human form.

That this divine Incarnation would be attested by unusual phenomena or miracles.

That this divine Impersonation would bring to earth the highest wisdom from above.

That he would live as a man.

That he would establish a kingdom of heavenly truth and justice.

That he would then die, and return to heaven.

That he was to be born of royal, not of priestly lineage.

These were the statements of the expectation.

This common expectation, revived after his death, was fulfilled in the person of Gautama Buddha, as indeed, according to tradition, it had been periodically revived and fulfilled anterior to his coming ; but the statements of the fulfilment in him, as bearing on the relations of Buddhism to Christianity, are very remarkable.

When, from this point of view, it is remembered that Gautama was born some six hundred years before Jesus of Nazareth, and that the attributed facts of his life are historical for at least the half of

that period, it becomes apparent why, when Jesus was accepted as the *O Erchomenos*, it came to be believed, and was therefore claimed, that these attributed facts were reproduced, these expectations re-fulfilled in his life.

However this may have been, when the remarkable parallelism between the few recorded facts in the lives, and between the scriptural and traditional teachings of Gautama Buddha, the completely enlightened wisdom, and Jesus of Nazareth, the divine word, is considered, the question forces itself on the mind, What is the meaning of this parallelism, and to what is it to be attributed ?

A wide field for speculation is opened here. And yet there is only one reasonable result to which any amount of speculation can lead—only one conclusion which, on reflection, it seems hardly possible to avoid ; for any idea of the action of coincidence on such a scale cannot be for a moment admitted.

Could such a re-attribution of facts and teachings have occurred without a large absorption of Buddhism—of influential and devout persons imbued with the Buddhistic expectation—into early Christianity ; of persons whose zeal, position and acquirements, enabled them to influence and infuse the ideas to which they clung into the minds of inquirers after the teachings of Jesus ?

The similarity between the mystical and ascetic methods and the monastic and anchorite systems of the old and new faiths certainly points in this direction.

Such an absorption would, of course, have taken place under the belief that Jesus was the promised Paraklete of Buddha, and before the Christian records had crystallized into their preserved forms ; and would fully account for the gradual blending of the traditional history of the one with the little that was known of the actual life of the other, and the ultimate moulding of the received gospels on a thus amalgamated tradition.

Such an absorption would, under spirit guidance, have been a ready instrument to promote the designs of the risen Christ ; while from the action and reaction that accompanied it, would have sprung the germs from which Christianity, in its several forms, was derived.

DOCTRINAL SIMILITUDES.

The representative Character of Names.

WHAT is there in a name?

It has been said, "A rose by any other name had smelt as sweet." And so, indeed, it would ; for the beauty and fragrance of the flower in no wise depend upon what it is called.

And yet, perhaps, when the rose attracted this designation to itself, it was so named because the meaning of the word represented the position it was then, as now, held to be entitled to in the floral kingdom ; for in the Semitic tongues *Ros* says "head."

The typical Character of Names.

What Manou was in the East, what Manès in Egypt, what Minos in Greece, that was Moses to the Hebrews—their divinely accepted lawgiver.

These were typical men, and the Semitic root, *m'n*, common to the three first, signifies a "figure" or "image."

The symbolical Character of Names.

What Zeus indicated, "God ;" what Jezeus, "the pure divine essence ;" what Isis, a divine personage ; that was Jesus held to have been, a divine Incarnation.

These were symbolical names ; and when Manou, Manès and Minos, are taken as one series, and Jezeus, Isis and Jesus, as another, then Moses (interpreted by some, through the Egyptian, as son of Isis) becomes the verbal link through which the one series passes into the other.

The indoctrinating Character of Names.

Moses is said to have been so named because he was drawn forth or delivered from the waters of Egypt.

He might well have been so named because he drew forth the Hebrew people from their Egyptian bondage. And in this sense he might have been held to have prefigured the Saviour, Jesus, who draws those who follow him from spiritual servitude.

The idealizing Character of Names.

At any rate, Moses, the actual freer from bondage and imposer of law, became a type of the freer of those who sinned against the law he had imposed

and enforced. And viewed in this sense, the idea embodied in this transition is, that of the passage of man from physical, through spiritual bondage, to ultimate freedom.

The transformative Character of Names.

The idealization here is complete. The suggested necessity of law to free him from the bondage of the evil transmitted through the creating, and perpetuated in the created man. His subsequent fall through spiritual into ecclesiastical bondage ; from whence, under a revulsive reaction, an ultimate actual freedom is gained.

The impersonating Character of Names.

And when this idealization is traced, through their names, into the characters those names represent, it becomes a question whether, in some instances, these characters were not idealized impersonations rather than actual personalities ; and whether, even where the personalities are undoubted and historical, characteristic traditions concerning them are not attributions, in confirmation of the idea of which the life is thus made the embodiment.

The evolutionary Character of Names.

This much is certain—that an idea once suggested and applied, especially a metaphysical idea

passing through a spiritual evolution, is, in transmission, subject to transformation in scope, and to transference in objective application; so that, in tracing the passage of such an idea through its typical historical, representative channels, it is necessary, in each case, carefully to distinguish the possible actual from the probable attributive.

Personified Doctrinal Idealizations.

The Hindu and the Hebrew scriptures abound in personified doctrinal idealizations.

In these personified idealizations there are marked characteristic resemblances between some of the impersonations of the earlier with certain of those of the later scriptures; such resemblances as leave it open to question whether the later is not an adaptation of the earlier type—for all are typical, even when historical personages.

Adigarta in Abraham.

Take, for example, the Hindu patriarch, Adigarta, and the Hebrew patriarch, Abraham.

Both of these patriarchs were pre-eminently devout and divinely favoured men.

Both married reputed sisters.

The wives of both, after a prolonged period of

barrenness, each, under somewhat analogous circumstances, gave birth to a son—a child of promise.

Both were commanded to sacrifice the child of promise—Adgigarta, in punishment of an offence ; Abraham, to test his obedience.

The hands of both were withheld, when uplifted with the sacrificial knife to strike the death-blow they had been commanded to inflict—a death-blow which would have destroyed their hopes and expectations.

And the children of promise were thus, in each case, preserved, that the promise given through them might be fulfilled.

This promise was, in the case of Adgigarta, that from him should spring the virgin who was superhumanly to conceive the long foretold and expected *Asith*, the divine Renewer.

This promise has been read of Abraham as, that he should be the father of many nations. But the words thus read also say that he was to be the father of the chosen of the nations.

When this reading is taken into account, with reference to the analogies thus indicated, is it surprising to find that the Hebrew word rendered Abraham is an apocopated form of the utterance, *Abra' h' am*, “I shall beget the mother”—the mother of the chosen of the nations, of the begotten of God?

For then the promises are found to have been identical.

It certainly is suggestive, as to the significance of such analogies, that this interpretation of the word Abraham, and of the promise given to him, has been so long lost sight of.

Jezeus Krishna in Jesus Christ.

Far more significant coincidences in the traditional or legendary lives of historic personages have been handed down, coincidences which give grounds for very serious reflection.

Was Jezeus Krishna a forerunner of Jesus Christ?

The life and teaching of Jesus, if not foreshadowed by, certainly bear a striking resemblance to, the life and preaching of Jezeus.

Krishna, the incarnate spirit of God, was, after due announcement, divinely conceived by and born of an intact virgin.

The birth of this virgin mother was, in some sort, a preparation for that of her divine son; for it was preceded by marvellous presages and surrounded by strange events; and she was herself called Devanaguy, that is, "Formed for God."

The child was born in a shepherd's hut, to which its mother had been mysteriously conveyed; was

adored by the shepherds, who prostrated themselves before it ; and then by a noble relative, named Nanda, and other holy personages, who worshipped the virgin and her child, and, divinely warned, removed them to a place of safety, to secure them from the cruelty of a tyrant uncle.

This uncle sought the death of the child to preserve his own throne ; and, to secure it, ordered the massacre of all the male infants born in his dominions during the night on which Krishna came into the world.

The child was called Krishna, that is "Consecrated," by divine command.

On reaching the age of manhood, Krishna began to traverse India, preaching innocence and peace to all ; combating the perverse spirit not only of the people but even of their princes ; and surmounting extraordinary dangers.

Collecting a small band of disciples round him, of whom the favourite was called Ard-jouna, he taught them his doctrine, that they might partake of his labours.

His course was marked by what are commonly called miracles. He restored their hearing to the deaf, their speech to the dumb, and their vision to the blind ; cured lepers, and even resuscitated the dead.

He sustained the weak against the strong ; the oppressed against their oppressors.

He proclaimed himself the second person of the divine Trinity, come upon earth to release man from the consequences of his original sin ; to drive out the spirit of evil, and restore the reign of goodness.

He was received by the people as the "He that cometh"—as the divine Renewer promised to their forefathers ; and their hearts were so drawn to him that on one occasion they led him in triumph into their capital, strewing the ground with their garments and making rich offerings to him—all of which he disregarded, taking only a single flower presented to him by a poor gardener.

He withdrew himself from his disciples from time to time, to prove their faith and their endurance ; coming back to them after a while, to renew their courage.

On one occasion, to dissipate their fears, he was transfigured before them ; when his disciples, unable to bear the brightness of his glory, prostrated themselves, and, burying their faces in the dust, begged him to pardon their weakness. And it was then that they gave him the name Jezeus, "Issue of the pure divine essence."

On another occasion, two women of the lowest class, who were barren and desired to have children,

came to him, and, having poured sweet perfumes on his head from a small metal vase, adored him, embracing his feet. And he granted their prayer.

He imparted his doctrine in maxims and parables.

The work of renewing having been accomplished, and the time for his withdrawal from the earth and return to the bosom of him who had sent him having arrived, he went alone to the borders of the Ganges for his ablutions.

Having completed these, while with uplifted hands and eyes and lost in prayer, he was pierced by the arrows of assassins who had followed him, led by one who thus avenged himself on the unveiler of his crimes.

And then, looking on the body of him whom they had pierced, his murderers hung it to the branches of a tree, that it might become the prey of vultures.

When his disciples heard of his death, they came in search of his remains, to preserve them from desecration ; but these had already disappeared, having, as was supposed, regained their heavenly mansion.

The Buddha in the Christ.

When the time for the coming of the Tathagatha had arrived, Gautama was conceived of the Holy Spirit by the royal virgin bride Maya, and born,

according to one computation, on Christmas-day, but, in conformity with another, in the month of May.

His mother brought him forth at an inn, when on a journey ; and attendant spirits exulted at the birth of the holy child, singing, " This day is Buddha born on earth to give joy and peace to men." And four kings joined in the heavenly strain.

Celestial signs accompanied the birth ; and an aged ascetic, seeing these signs and hearing the heaven-borne song, visited and took the holy child in his arms, and, on restoring it to its mother, returned to his mountain home rejoicing that his eyes had seen the promised and long-expected saviour.

At the age of twelve years he was presented in the temple, where he astonished the learned with the wisdom of his questions.

His baptism was, like Jacob's in the Jaboc, super-humanly induced during the crossing of a river, when spirits showered upon him every kind of flower and perfume ; from which river, being unable to reach the opposite shore without help, he was rescued by the Divine Spirit. This took place when he was at the age of thirty years.

He then went into the wilderness, where he was tempted by the Evil One, who, transforming him-

self, appeared to and offered him the kingdoms of the world if he would renounce the way of life he had embraced.

Having resisted and overcome his tempter, he was encouraged and comforted by the ministrations of eight guardian angels.

He then began to preach publicly—retiring, from time to time, with his disciples into gardens, and generally avoiding the cities. And when his disciples reached the number of sixty, he sent them out in different directions to preach.

His teaching was similar to, and indeed in many respects identical with, that of Jesus ; and many of his parables very closely resemble those of the Nazarene. Universal peace prepared the world for his advent. What are generally termed miracles were worked by him. He healed the sick ; the blind received their sight ; the deaf heard ; the dumb spoke ; the halt were made whole ; and those bound by hell, or possessed by spirits, made free.

Gautama is described as full of grace, and bringing truth to the earth. In pictures he is surrounded with a brightness similar to the sun, in which fiery tongues are visible ; and two men are represented, one on each side of him, as though he were the second person of a Trinity.

Unequaled amongst those born of woman, he is

called the Lion of the tribe of Sâkya, and the Light of the world ; a world to which he came as to his own, his own possession.

Towards the close of his life, Gautama is said to have been transfigured, or baptized with fire. On a mountain whither he had retired, a brilliant light suddenly descended on him and encircled his brow. Then the glory of his form shone forth with redoubled power, so that his body was refulgent, as a golden image, and dazzling as with the brightness of the sun attempered by that of the moon. And he seemed divided into three persons.

He taught the poor and ignorant, and chose many of his disciples from amongst these. And two women, the wife and mother of his first convert, one of whom he healed from a severe illness, became his followers.

He illustrated his doctrine by his life. Hence the lowest caste was the especial object of his care, though the law-book of Manou excluded these from the knowledge and the rewards of the life to come.

He taught in parables and proverbs.

He said of his doctrine upon one occasion, "You may remove the snowy mountains from their base ; you may exhaust the waters of the ocean ; the firmament may fall to the earth ; but my word will in the end be accomplished."

He enjoined that the tares should be suffered to grow up with the wheat.

It is related of him that being thirsty he asked a low-caste man for some milk ; and of his cousin and favourite disciple that, under the like circumstances, addressing a despised low-caste woman who was drawing water at a well, he said, "Give me to drink ;" and when she pointed to her low caste as forbidding her even to speak to him, replied, "My sister, I do not ask after your family, I ask you for water."

"There is a treasure laid up by man," said Gautama upon another occasion, "which is secret, secure and passeth not away ; which no thief can steal, and which its possessor takes with him from the earth."

He preached in his own tongue, but was heard by each in his native language.

He denounced all sacrifices.

He announced his approaching death to his disciples with the words, "Arise ! Let us go hence. My time is come."

He promised that another Buddha, another organ or advocate of divine wisdom, should descend from heaven, who should be called the "Son of Love." And this other advocate or Paraklete, thus promised by Gautama, was to be a spirit of truth.

The religion of Gautama was essentially a religion of humanity.

He taught the grand truth that suffering borne for the sake of another is a great good. And it is related of him that in a previous existence he gave his body and blood to a hawk to save the life of a dove.

But Buddhism knows nothing of an offended Deity, reconciled by the expiation of an atoning sacrifice.

The grand conception of Gautama was, that the salvation of mankind was inseparable from a progression in humanity.

Man has always possessed an ideal of what he conceives he ought to have been ; of what he feels he ought to aspire to be.

This ideal is suggested to him by an enlightening conscience.

But from the dawn of his race he has misread his actual relations to this ideal, and attributed these to a falling away, in the persons of his first parents, from the state in which they had been created and the conditions under which they had at first lived. And then, continuing this misreading, he has interpreted his aspirations into a promise of a restoration to and a renewal in that state of which a degraded nature has dispossessed and deprived him.

According to the doctrinal reading of the Hebrew account of the fall of man in the book of Genesis, the first parents of the human race fell through accepting the teaching of spirit; and, so doing, passed under the dominion thereof.

This teaching has long been lost sight of in the reading intended for the vulgar, that a serpent was the tempter of Eve, and through Eve of Adam.

Such a rendering of the narrative could be imparted to the unenlightened at a time when these believed that animals were able to converse and reason with man.

Such a reading was even highly acceptable to them, since under it they were enabled to blame others for their own shortcomings. But that it should have held its ground till now, and be still maintained, is little short of marvellous—the more so when the statements perpetuated thereby are brought to the test of criticism.

As a matter of fact, though there always has been more or less enmity between spirit and man, between priestcraft and mankind, there never has been a general enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

So far from this having ever been the case, serpents have been almost universally worshipped; have been looked up to as the symbols of infinite

wisdom and treated with awe, or avoided with dread.

When, however, it is recognized that the predicted antagonism is to be between spirit and the woman, between the seed of the spirit—its spirit and priestly offspring—and the seed of the woman, mankind in general, the actual teaching can hardly be missed.

But there is another reading even beyond this—the reading of the fully initiated—“I will raise up *Asith* (the “I will renew”) between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed”—and in this reading the first promise of a Restorer is found.

Seth, the replacer of his brother, was looked up to as this Restorer. Abel had been so considered; and his name, “the Bel,” would seem to have attributed to him a divine origin. But his brief life ended in a sudden dissolution, in which, as a fleeting breath, he prefigured the ultimate fate of spirit.

It seems more than probable that the genealogy of Adam, from Seth to Noah, is the record of a succession of semi-divinized Restorers or teachers; and that the ages attributed to each respectively give the relative periods of the predominance of the special influence of the thus personified idealizations; and the recovered meanings of the several names confirm such a view, while throwing light

on the transformations through which the leading idea gradually passed. These indicate a line of progressive degradation, which culminated in the complete corruption of man antecedent to the flood.

The Eastern line of attribution, if it may be thus distinctively termed, differs from this, since its Restorers are in a measure reproductions each of his predecessor. And it is owing to this that the gospel life of Jesus of Nazareth is a representation or revival, under a new aspect, of the more prominent features of the legendary lives of the most eminent "Saviours" of the Eastern tradition.

But Jesus of Nazareth equally repudiated either pretension.

It is true only the merest traces of his feelings in this regard have escaped the notice of the more than ruthless re-modellers of the Gospels. But these are sufficient guides for the acute inquirer.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus holds both priest and Levite up to the contempt and scorn of his hearers.

But in condemning these, he condemns the Hebrew tradition.

In referring to the blind guides which strain out the gnat and swallow the camel, he equally discredits Buddhism and Brahmanism.

But so doing, he rejects the Eastern tradition.

In directly stating the evil consequences of putting new wine into old skins, and of mending old garments with new cloth, he pointedly declares that new doctrine cannot be received by old teachers, and that old doctrines cannot be made sound by new teachings.

But so doing, he rejects both the new and the old.

In concluding his parables regarding the kingdom of heaven, he says of those occupied with the transcription and interpretation of the scriptures, the transmission and perpetuation of their teaching: "Every scribe who hath been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is master of a house, who casteth out of his treasure the new and the old"—in which the rejection of both new and old scriptures and traditions is plainly indicated.

Well as this warning was needed then, is it not still more required now? For, with all the experience of the past as interpreted by the present, and of the present as interpreted by the past, the new and the old are constantly interblended, that the old may give authority and stability to the new, and the new throw fresh light upon the old.

In the blending of the legends of Jezeus Krishna, of Gautama Buddha and of Jesus of Nazareth, in

the accepted life of Jesus Christ, the authority sought thereby at the time, with the purpose for which it had been appropriated, disappeared in an achieved success, under which the old by adoption became the new. And as long as the three legendary lives were kept apart, the derived life could not but serve its purpose. But their juxtaposition raises an issue which cannot be passed over.

The similarity of these lives is so complete in their main features as necessarily to arouse suspicion.

This suspicion gains strength when it is found that some of the names met with in the first life are reproduced in the second.

This suspicion acquires the force of a conviction when it is realized that a favourite disciple as well of Krishna as of Gautama was called *Ard-Jouna*, while the favourite disciple of Jesus was named *John*, "Favoured."

This conviction is, that the traces of a stupendous fraud—of a fraud termed by the followers of Jesus "the Mystery of Iniquity"—are at length coming to light; of a fraud designed and carried on by a superhuman will, since uninspired human genius could not have devised such a comprehensive design, and unsupported human aspirations could not have maintained such a sustained effort.

This conviction is only too well founded.

Man has been made the subject of mystification as to the morality of the natural order in which he finds himself ; has become the victim of mysticism in his spiritual tendencies.

But when his attention has been once directed to the traces of so great a fraud, his intelligence will not fail him in his endeavours to unravel its fabrications, and to discover the clue that leads out of the labyrinth in which it has so long entangled him.

JESUS, BAR RABBA, OR JESUS,
BAR ABBA?

JESUS, BAR RABBA, OR JESUS, BAR ABBA?

WHICH WILL YE?

FORMERLY names were not mere designations. They had meanings in them. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

Then names were used as symbols of the doctrine set forth in the teaching or illustrated by the lives of their respective bearers. Jesus saved his people from their sins, in the legal and dogmatic sense, by commanding them each to forgive his brother that brother's trespasses against himself. For so doing, he caused them to break, and thus delivered them from the bondage of the law, which, imputing what it could not remit, forbade such forgiveness.

When names bore this significant character, a change of name indicated a change in state. Simon, "the hearer" or disciple, was called Peter, "the first-born" of "the free," because he was the first freed by Jesus from the servitude of Judaism.

Hence names were used as the transmitters of doctrine. The Baptist was called John—"He did penance," "He caused to do penance"—because he was an ascetic and preached asceticism. And when divisions took place, such names became party emblems. And it was supposed, by those who so used the names of their leaders, that these names were, through their meanings, safe guides to the doctrines those leaders had taught. For it was thought that the meanings of names were immutable.

Sometimes names were used conjointly. Then they were endowed with a special symbolism—the intention being thus to denote the reconciliation or assumed reconciliation of opposing teachers, of opposing parties, of opposing doctrines. A common commemorative festival was given to Peter and Paul, to promote the re-union of two parties of whose distinctive doctrines these names had been the emblems. A common religion, to be recognized as Christianity, was sought through the combination of the names Jesus Christ. This combination was adopted by the party of Christ—by that party to which Paul has been held to refer in 1 Cor. i. 12. It is true this is a mistaken rendering; but the fact of such a reading having been adopted in all versions from a very early date, shows that the existence of this

party was then a matter of common knowledge, though all further traces thereof have been carefully obliterated. This party sought to bring the followers of Jesus into their own ranks by, in semblance, identifying the living Jesus with the risen Christ in the assumed personality of Jesus Christ.

More often, from the hands of adroit controversialists, fresh derivations were forthcoming for symbolical names, through which other meanings, conveying new and strange doctrines, were attributed to them. The unusual Hebrew designation of the Baptist was rendered John, and in this way confounded with the ordinary Hebrew form of that word. His was an extraordinary name, which, when given, amazed those who heard it. The Hebrew *Peter*, "the first-born," "the free," was changed into the Greek *Petros*, and read through *petra* as "the rock," that Simon, surnamed Peter, might be turned into the symbol of an organized church. And Simon was then said to have been named *Cephas*, and to have derived his name, Peter, through the Greek representative of that word. This was the "robbing of Peter to pay Paul" which stamped its mark indelibly on the Christian world. And so the younger robbed and drove out the elder.

Thus much can be gathered from carefully considering the significative relations of names.

The elder has been robbed and driven out by the younger; the follower of Jesus by the follower of Christ.

And now the robbed and banned elder, the rejecter of false doctrine, had to keep his faith in hiding. The followers of Jesus had to hold the truth in secrecy; had to transmit it under a veiled symbolism.

Few amongst the many, weak amongst the strong, they were the Chréstians in the Christian body; the users of life, as contrasted with the believers in unction.

For these the symbolism of the transfiguration suggested the passing away of the law and the prophets, with Moses and Elijah in a cloud, to leave them alone with Jesus.

He was their saviour, their mediator. He suffered none to come between them and their Divine Father. With him, for them, all mediation ceased for ever. Hence his was, in their eyes, an imputed, not an actual, Christhood.

To these, the Christ was a robber who sought to deprive them of the freedom they had gained through Jesus.

Now a robber had been preferred by the multitude to Jesus, when the freedom of the latter had been offered to them. A notorious robber. "Whom will

ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus?" the Roman governor had asked. And the people had shouted with one accord, "Barabbas!"

Such was the accepted tradition.

To the followers of Jesus this tradition became the vehicle for a doctrinal teaching.

So using it, they read the Roman governor's demand, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Jesus, the Barabbas, or Jesus, that is called the Christ?"

In this reading, Jesus, the Barabbas, is contrasted with Jesus that is called the Christ, to show that the robber they symbolized under this figure had stolen the name of Jesus while imputing to him the office of the Christ; had done this in order to appropriate both name and office in an assumed personality.

Who could the robber thus figured have been but the personator who had appeared as the risen Christ and commanded the foundation of Christianity?

To the believers in such a personation the veiled symbolism thus set forth would have been complete, the actual teaching unmistakable. Jesus, bar Rabba, Jesus, the son of the teacher, was therein contrasted with Jesus, bar Abba, Jesus, the son of the Father, to remind the followers of the latter that in Christianity the risen Christ had supplanted and taken

the place of the living Jesus—that, corruptly transforming his teaching in his form and name, he might the more effectually maintain and transmit the assumed prerogatives of a delusive office.

THE LIVING JESUS OR THE RISEN CHRIST?

WAS Christianity founded by Jesus of Nazareth?

To say that it was founded by the risen Christ is to beg the question, for the resurrection is the keystone of Christianity.

Jesus was in conflict with the spirit world, casting out spirits from those possessed by them.

Why was Jesus in conflict with the spirit world?

Was it because the spirit of the earth, thinking and calling itself and acting as God, had taken the place of the divine towards man? Was it because this personating god had turned man from the natural order in which he had been placed by his divine Father? Because it had subjected him to spiritual and supernatural agencies? Because it held him under the stern yoke of a sanguinary revealed law, administered by a Christhood or order of anointed priests, its instruments; at the head of which was a high-priest, the Christ of Jehovah, its official mouthpiece? And because he sought to

free man from spiritual, from ecclesiastical and sacerdotal bondage, and to recall him from the supernatural to the natural:—so sought to recall him that he might regain that freedom to which he was entitled as a potential son of the Author of nature, who created and carries on the world by natural means?

However this may have been, Jesus was in conflict with the spirit world.

The spirit world was therefore in conflict with him.

Hence the head of that world or spirit of the earth watched him narrowly from the commencement of this conflict.

At first it sought to rouse his spirit instincts, expecting through these to spiritualize his life and doctrine, as, at an earlier period in the history of man, it had succeeded in spiritualizing and supernaturalizing the life and doctrine of Abram, when the patriarch sought freedom from sacerdotalism in nature.

Failing in this, it brought his career to a premature and ignominious close, in order the more easily and completely to subvert the gospel or good news, the gospel of flesh, the recall to nature he was so successfully preaching.

Jesus succeeded as a teacher because his doctrine

appealed to the natural instincts of the human heart. Hence his doctrine was rapidly spreading.

That doctrine was a complete subversion of the spiritual teaching of the spirit of the earth. Hence it must be itself subverted.

On the death of Jesus, the easiest and most certain way of subverting his teaching would have been to personate him as the risen Christ ; to persuade his followers that he had promised them so to rise again ; and then to explain all he had taught them in a spiritual sense.

To do this would have been to undo the work Jesus had laid down his life to uphold.

Was this the course pursued ?

What was the work Jesus had laid down his life to maintain ?

The call of Jesus was addressed to those who had been beguiled by the spiritualizing teaching of the spirit of the earth in Judaism ; to those who had been brought to believe that God required them to follow the prescriptions of a revealed and imposed law ; to those whose lives the aim of this law was to spiritualize and supernaturalize.

Thus the call of Jesus was a veritable recall—a recall from Judaism. That is to say, the mission of Jesus was a mission of contradiction—of contradiction to Judaism.

But if the mission of Jesus was a mission of contradiction to Judaism, he must have called upon those whom he addressed to abandon the teachings thereof. He must have appealed to them to follow him; to become, like himself and in accordance with his example, sons of God. He must have taught them that the sons of God were guided in their lives, even as he was, by their divine Father. He must have told them that the first step to be taken by such as desired to regain their birthright and be re-admitted to the freedom of the divine sonship, was to renounce all doctrinal teaching, all mediation; and he must have required them to suffer none to come between them and that Father. While the subversion of his teaching would have been, at the very least, a recall to doctrinal precepts, and their outcome, organized systems of mediation.

Thus, at the very outset of the inquiry whether Christianity was founded by its reputed author, it is necessary to determine whether the risen Christ was or was not a personating spirit—a spirit which assumed and appeared in the form of Jesus, in order to subvert the work of his life. For if this should prove to have been the case, then, so far from Christianity having been founded by Jesus, it will have been the instrument through whose agency the work

for which he sacrificed his life has been subverted to those who have embraced it.

The first suggestive fact in the history of the resurrection is, that it was wholly unexpected by the disciples and followers of Jesus, although it is attributed to the chief priests and Pharisees that they remembered that deceiver said while he was yet alive, "After three days I rise again."

From this it would appear that the resurrection taught by Jesus, and looked for by his followers, was not expected by them to take place in this world, so as to be known of man. It was to remain, as it ever had been, a subject of faith, and therefore removed from the sphere of knowledge.

The Jews had received the teaching of Jesus concerning the resurrection in one sense ; his disciples in another. Thus an opening was given for misinterpreting the mind of Jesus, and then persuading his followers that they had misunderstood the sense in which he had spoken.

This opening was made use of, not by the Jews, but by the spirit which, in the risen Christ, successfully personated Jesus.

The Jews did not believe in a cognizable resurrection. They suspected trickery—a trickery to be carried on by the followers of Jesus with a view to a pretended resurrection ; not a trickery of a super-

natural order, in which a materialized spirit was to appear in the form of Jesus and act the part of the risen Christ. And because they suspected trickery on the part of the disciples, they placed a seal on the tomb in which the body of Jesus had been buried, and set a watch thereover, to prevent its violation.

But violation and trickery were as little in the minds of the disciples as was the expectation of the resurrection of the body laid in the sepulchre, since preparations were made to embalm that body; and it was only on seeking it for embalmment, after the resurrection, that it was found to be missing.

And yet the sepulchre was violated, even if by a spirit or angel, and the seal disregarded; so that its presence was a proof of nothing but an expectancy of fraud. For the stone was rolled back and the tomb left open. Though why this should have been done, since the risen Christ could pass into a room with closed doors, is hard to conceive; especially as a resurrection through an unviolated tomb would have been much more convincing—unless indeed the entombed Jesus and the risen Christ were different beings, and it was impossible, even for the personator, to remove the body otherwise.

The second suggestive fact in the history of the resurrection is, that the risen Christ was not imme-

diately recognized by the disciples and followers of Jesus to whom he first showed himself; so that even those who should have known him best mistook him. Indeed, the impression given by the narratives of his apparitions is that of one *feeling his way to a recognition through those most easily worked upon*—as the susceptible Mary Magdalen—which is just what a personator would have done. For his form and features were as those of another, until he spoke with the voice and used the gestures of Jesus. While, even with all these precautions, some doubted.

The third suggestive fact in the history of the resurrection is a very significant one; for in the accounts of the apparitions of the risen Christ, it is stated that while, on first appearing, he forbade the touching of his body, later on he invited the feeling and handling of the same. This is a fact of peculiar import, since such is the course pursued by spirits materializing forms they wish to assume; for these do not suffer themselves to be touched at first, and can only endure to be felt and handled after they have acquired experience in the use of their factitious forms.

These facts alone, with others that need not be specified, speak for themselves. It is true the narratives of the resurrection seem to have been written

under different conceptions of the circumstances under which it took place, and of what the evidence concerning it was intended to prove, especially as regards the violation or non-violation of the tomb; and that they have been mangled and corrupted—so mangled and corrupted that no two of its historians are found agreeing. And it is further true that these differences culminate in direct contradictions on certain crucial points. But this shows that the history itself rests upon an uncertain tradition; a tradition slowly forming at different places without intercommunication; a divergent tradition, whose only agreement is in the fact of a resurrection, all the circumstances of which go to prove that it was a personation: and that the disciples and followers of Jesus were only too ready to believe in the personator—though, even so, some doubted.

When the possibility that the risen Christ was a personator—a personating spirit—is fully grasped, the motive for such a personation becomes plain and unmistakable. The spirit of the earth used this impersonation that, by the assumed form and usurped authority of Jesus, it might restore the power to spirit of which the teaching of the Saviour had deprived it.

To do this, it explained away the natural meaning of the remembered utterances of Jesus by inter-

preting these in a supernatural sense. And this sense was so foreign to the conception of the disciples, and they were so loth to receive it, that it was imputed to them that their own dulness of heart and slowness of apprehension was the cause of their not having perceived and understood the meaning of these teachings when they were originally imparted.

The mission of Jesus had been a mission of contradiction to Judaism ; that is, to a system of religion founded by spirit agency and carried on by spirit action.

The mission of the personating or risen Christ was, therefore, a mission of contradiction to the mission of Jesus, and an attempt to subvert the work of his life.

To do this, the spirit acting the part of the risen Christ had to proceed tentatively, to avert suspicion ; had to act suggestively, to gain time and ensure the successful carrying out of its design. It shrank from the risk of a prolonged intercourse with the followers of Jesus, lest detection of the fraud it was attempting should ensue ; and therefore promised to send them spirit help—the so-called spirit of the Father—which was to recall to their minds and make them understand, or re-interpret to them, the teachings of Jesus. By this instrumentality it pro-

posed to give the sense it was its design to impute unto these teachings ; and it prepared the way for success by commanding them to do all under the authority and through the power of the spirit.

Having taken these precautions, it ascended from the earth and vanished in the heavens, under the gaze of the awe-struck disciples, after the few apparitions it had ventured on. It did not deem it prudent to multiply these, because of the difficulties and dangers of materialization. It did not dare to prolong them, because of the risk of detection by those who openly expressed their doubts as to the character of the apparitions.

After the ascension, at the time named, it sent the promised spirit in an impressive manner, as a baptism of fire, to those awaiting its coming in the place appointed. And its willing recipients in this way passed once more under the power of the spirit, from which Jesus had delivered them.

The Gospels are silent as to this reception of the spirit. This silence on such a subject cannot but be regarded as very significant, coupled, as it is, with the cursory way in which they deal with those vital Christian incidents, the resurrection and ascension. But they do admit the suggestive fact, that some of the followers of Jesus doubted. Whether all were willing recipients of the spirit then imparted

may, therefore, well be questioned ; though the desire to believe that the risen Christ was Jesus, as affirmed, must have been strong in the breasts of all, so that many would have been only too easily over-persuaded.

But the doctrine propounded by the risen Christ, through the spirit sent to carry on its work and its deluded agents, must soon have shown some of its victims the real nature of the delusion into which they had been betrayed ; the real character of the snare by which they had been entrapped.

That Peter was so aroused from the practical denial of his Master into which he had been thus for a time beguiled, tradition—a carefully guarded tradition—declares ; and, once aroused, devoted himself to the overthrow of the doctrine inculcated by his beguiler.

According to this tradition, he followed Paul, the apostle of the resurrection, the apostle called, converted and commissioned by the risen Christ, from place to place, and even to Rome, to contradict the teaching and prevent the spread of the doctrine of that apostle. But the actuality and meaning of this pursuit have been ingeniously veiled under the designation Simon Magus, possibly given to Paul under these circumstances, not only because of his mysticism, but because he claimed to be greater (*majus* for *major*) than Simon Peter.

The antagonism between Peter and Paul has left its mark in history, its traces in the New Testament; and a pseudo-reconciliation between their professing followers, after all had passed under the power of the spirit, is commemorated in the festival dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul.

The sorrow of Peter for his denial of his Master is recorded in the Gospels. Was not the bitterness of that sorrow caused by the second series of denials rather than by the first? To veil the one in the other would, in that case, have been a necessary incident of the only too successful fraud.

The spirit influences, so re-introduced, have continued the work, thus re-commenced, ever since.

This work was the re-interpretation, the misrepresentation, of the teachings of Jesus, with a view to their ultimate complete subversion.

The action of these influences was gradual and progressive.

Spirit can only act through a medium.

The ordinary medium used by spirit, in its action upon man, is such human beings as are susceptible of its influence.

Human beings so instigated are held to be inspired, but are actually possessed.

Their actuating spirit, however, can only use them as they are, with all their defects and imperfections ;

can only act upon and change them slowly, through surrounding influences ; and owing to this, the working of spirit is ever a halting working, full of errors and imperfections as regards the work in hand, and the methods and processes by which it is being carried on.

The instability of things temporal is its constant difficulty.

The views of man are continually changing.

The methods by which imparted or acquired knowledge is handed down are so imperfect, that the transmitted teaching is undergoing change even as it is handed down, and in this way further changes the views of man concerning it.

The inspired writings, wherein spirit-given teachings are preserved, are themselves subject to various disintegrating influences, which cause them to take many forms.

Each of these forms generally carries with it a change in doctrine.

From these changes in doctrine endless divisions arise. And it is possible that these divisions may creep into and be perpetuated in the teaching spirit world, as the disembodied spirits of spirit-taught men pass thereto.

Owing to this, the teachings of spirit are divided and contradictory ; and the work itself becomes a

patchwork, in which one incongruous doctrine becomes grafted on to another until the whole is a mass of confusion.

Christianity is carried on by the agency of spirits.

This Christians admit, even while claiming that a single spirit, which they term the spirit of God, is the actual worker.

But a divided work is ever the result of a divided working, and Christianity is full of divisions. And of these, the most numerous, the best organized and most consistent bodies of Christians admit that the spirit workers are many—the spirits of the departed, or saints, according to their teaching, sharing in the work.

Christianity is a house divided against itself.

Jesus said of such a house that it could not stand.

In so saying, he condemned Christianity.

Could he have intended to found after his death that which he had condemned during his life?

Jesus left behind him good grain, planted in the human soil, in which it was to germinate and bring forth its fruit in due season.

The enemy came, in the form of the risen Christ, and sowed tares amongst the wheat planted by Jesus: tares which so resemble the good grain that, though they choke and suffocate it, they must be

suffered to grow therewith, lest in rooting them up some of the good grain should be plucked out.

These tares are Christianity, in which the teachings of Jesus are so distorted as to be unrecognizable, even though his actual words may, in some cases, have been preserved.

Christianity is not the work of Jesus. This is the truth which has to be realized. It is the work of his great antagonist, the risen Christ.

But as the work of the risen Christ, it is itself a resurrection ; for it is a revival, an adaptation, a development of teachings which Jesus of Nazareth had, while living, passed over and set aside, *because subversive of the fundamental truth he laid down his life to uphold.*

THE RISEN CHRIST, A PERSONATING SPIRIT.

SAUL, the persecutor of the followers of Jesus, as Paul, the convert of the risen Christ and the apostle of the resurrection, was the virtual founder of Christianity.

Was Paul converted by the risen Christ because the persecuting spirit, which had actuated him as Saul, made him a fitting instrument to give a renewing impulse to and guide a movement which was to have a resurrection of its own, or revive as and pass into a persecuting Church?

Was he converted because the doctrine of the resurrection, to be enforced by him and through his instrumentality, was not accepted by the followers of Jesus?

Was he converted to give a new impetus to this too slowly spreading doctrine, and modify the prevailing view as to its basis?

Paul, as the apostle of the resurrection, was the apostle of the resurrection to the Gentiles.

Was Paul the apostle of the resurrection to the

Gentiles because these were necessarily ignorant of the teaching of the living Jesus, and were therefore not likely to call in question his doctrine on the subject?

The doctrine of Paul, the convert of the risen Christ and the apostle of the resurrection to the Gentiles, was regarded with suspicion by the disciples of Jesus.

Why was Paul suspected of preaching another gospel—a gospel other than the gospel of Jesus?

We have his own admission that his apostleship was denied; that his doctrine was called in question; that his most cherished follower and sharer of his labours after a time abandoned him.

We have only his own word that his gospel was not other than the gospel of Jesus; and that he successfully vindicated his doctrine before those appointed to inquire into it. But in advancing this claim he shows such an animus against his judges as leaves it open to a suspicion which the accompanying admission, that he was only permitted to address himself to the Gentiles, is hardly calculated to remove.

And then we have the voice of tradition, which affirms, in a veiled but hardly ambiguous form, that he was followed by Peter from place to place and even to Rome; and that everywhere this faithful

follower of Jesus openly and boldly contradicted his doctrine. And the special animus which Paul shows in his writings against Peter cannot but be held to confirm this tradition.

While the fact that Peter and Paul were at length regarded as the joint founders of the Christian Church, and the appointing to them of a joint and common feast therein, suggests that the followers of either, the followers of Jesus and the followers of the risen Christ, so long kept apart, were then ostensibly brought together as members of an organized Church.

This Church, virtually founded by Paul, though afterwards organized in the names of Peter and Paul, renewed and continued the persecution of the unyielding followers of Jesus which had been commenced and carried on by Saul; renewed and continued the persecution because these would not accept the doctrine of the resurrection inculcated by its apostle.

And yet amongst Paul's own converts, the Corinthians, members of the Church founded by himself, were found some who did not believe as he taught on this subject; for in addressing them (1 Cor. xv. 12) he wrote, "Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

Why did some of the Corinthians, his own converts, question his teaching here?

The doctrine of the apostle of the resurrection was evidently neither conclusive nor satisfying.

His method of imparting it was peculiar and suggestive. For while seemingly outspoken, and bold even to rashness in assertion, his dogmatizing statements so qualify each other that they for the most part stand in need of a doctrinal interpretation to reconcile his actual ambiguity of speech.

Nor is this strange, when the true character of his mission is taken into account.

He was sent to re-interpret the teaching of the living Jesus.

Hence he had to make that teaching the text of his epistles and discourses, that he might the more easily beguile his readers and hearers; and then to attribute thereunto another sense—a sense in semblance derived from, and professedly an expansion of, that text.

Not that Paul was an intentional beguiler, a conscious misinterpreter.

Not having known the living Jesus, he was himself beguiled.

Not having received his teaching from the lips of the living Jesus, he believed his own interpretation thereof to be the right one.

The teaching of Jesus in regard to the resurrection, as understood and transmitted by his followers, Paul was evidently well aware was—that man had life or death placed before him as the issue of his present existence, or, in other words, was only potentially immortal; that the issue between eternal life and final death was determined for each by his passing life, according as that life was well or ill spent, was lived according to the desire of God or otherwise; and that the resurrection put before man in this way was a resurrection unto life, and could therefore only be attained by such as fitted themselves for the life to which the resurrection led; so that the resurrection, according to Jesus and expected by his followers, was the passage of the soul through death to the state where death shall be no more, and would only be attained by some, not all, of the members of the human race.

This was the teaching of Jesus as then received.

The doctrine of Paul was directly opposed unto this. For he taught (1 Cor. xv. 22), “As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”—in which he made it clear to his own converts, the followers of the risen Christ, that all were to rise again from the dead, or be made alive once more. And yet, even so, he managed to give this doctrine a semblance of the teaching of Jesus by leaving it

open to his hearers to interpret the "all in Christ" as applying only to the followers of Jesus, if they so chose or could be persuaded to do. For then it could be made to appear that the resurrection he preached was a resurrection unto life, under which the necessity of a punishment other than final death, for those who have failed to attain unto the resurrection of life, disappears.

Yet, even so, strange contradictions pervade the doctrine of Paul.

He is the apostle of the risen Christ, the interpreter of the resurrection. And yet he affirms that the resurrection does not take place in the natural, but in a spiritual body.

The risen Christ certainly did not appear in a natural body, for it is related of him that he entered a room with closed doors.

But if the risen Christ did not appear in the natural body, wherein was the necessity for the resurrection of the natural body of Jesus? And what can the resurrection of that body teach to those who are not to rise again in the natural body?

The body of Jesus could not pass from the tomb till the stone which closed its entrance was rolled back.

The risen Christ never appeared in the body of Jesus.

Under such circumstances, what could have been the meaning of the resurrection of the body of Jesus? What lesson could it impart?

It was wholly unnecessary if man is not to rise again in his natural body; could not have been brought about by Jesus or in his behalf if that body was to be of no further use to him. And if he did not need it to re-appear in to his disciples, it can hardly be supposed that he would need it elsewhere or for other purposes.

The only thing that can be said of the resurrection of the body of Jesus, the only lesson to be drawn from it, is, that the resurrection set forth thereby is a resurrection unto disappearance.

But a resurrection unto disappearance is meaningless, can have no teaching value, and was wholly unnecessary.

And yet this resurrection unto disappearance carries with it a deep significance to those who know how to look beneath the surface of the narratives relating it, and are able to read between the lines of the several histories.

It testifies to a well-planned and ably-executed fraud.

Upon the source and nature of this fraud the words of the apostle of the resurrection are well calculated to throw light, for he says (1 Cor. xv. 45),

“The first man, Adam, became a living soul ; the last Adam a life-giving spirit.”

But as it was in the case of the first man who fell beneath its influence, so will it be till the direful effects of that influence ceases, for spirit can bring nothing but final death to mankind.

No one witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. The removal and disappearance of his body is all that the facts of the case declare.

To show the incredibility of the view that Jesus appeared to his followers after the removal of his body from the tomb in which it had been laid, it is only necessary to suggest what such an appearing would have implied.

This is learnt by asking the question, How is it known that Jesus so appeared after his death?

From the Gospels—whose authority is open to question?

From the Acts and Epistles—whose authority is even less valid?

From a teaching Church—whose authority gives to its scriptures such authority as they possess?

From either and all of these sources, which indeed melt into one—a teaching authority—such knowledge as is possessed on the subject is derived.

That is to say, all who believe in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth, so believe

because they are so taught ; for they have no possible means of verifying the teaching they receive.

In other words, by the Christian Church, by Christian teaching and by Christian teachers, all are required to receive and accept the doctrine of a teaching medium, and to hearken unto the voice and submit themselves to the authority of a human teacher ; for spirit can only speak to those not its mediums through a mediating human agency—hence the origin of a Christhood or anointed clergy.

But Jesus, as the Son of God, rejected the teaching authority of the Christ of Jehovah, the high-priest of the Jews ; set aside the scriptures—his voice becoming the word of God to his followers ; and even substituted the two commandments of love for the ten minatory commandments of the Law ; thus changing the basis and stimulating motive impulse of the active life of man ; and in so doing, rejected all mediate action, all doctrinal or indoctrinating influence.

And so doing, Jesus required so to be done. Hence in calling upon his followers to follow him, he invited and urged them, like and with himself, to reject all doctrinal teaching, all priestly or other so-called mediation between God and man.

But if Jesus, as the Son of God, passed over and set aside or rejected a Christhood which claimed to

have a divine origin, then to believe that he appeared, as the risen Christ, to his disciples; appointed them to be the witnesses to his resurrection, as the basis of the teaching he was about to give; and then commanded them to found a Christhood or Church, to replace the Christhood which living he had disregarded and ignored—is to assume that immediately after his death he contradicted and set aside the teaching of his whole life, its example and its precepts.

Could Jesus have done this?

The risen Christ did so, and made this doing the basis of Christianity.

Such having been the doing of the risen Christ, the question necessarily arises, Was the risen Christ Jesus of Nazareth?

And then the further question as necessarily follows, Was he not rather a personating spirit, which assumed the form and appeared in the likeness of Jesus, that in his name and with the semblance of his authority it might subvert his teaching?

But one answer seems possible to these questions. The risen Christ is a personating spirit.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A RE-VINDICATION
OF THE
LIFE AND TEACHING
OF
JESUS OF NAZARETH.



THE MESSIANIC EXPECTATION.

UNDER the Law the Jews had a Messiah or Christ—their high-priest. And in the Hebrew scriptures, as in the Mishnah, the high-priest is usually called the Messiah.

To this, at the demand of the Israelites, a second Messiah or king was added. And the kings of Israel are called the Messiah, or anointed of Jehovah, in the Hebrew scriptures.

These were the official Messiahs of the Jews ; and up to the Babylonian captivity they knew of and expected no other.

In Babylonia they came in contact with those who held the Eastern expectation of the *Tathagatha*—the “He that is to come”—who was to be a divine incarnation, the offspring of a spiritu-virginal conception.

The Jews in their captivity were anxiously looking for a Messiah or king, to be raised up by Jehovah, to deliver them from their bondage.

Their teachers, accepting the Eastern view of the

Messiahship, of the "He that is to come," sought to spiritualize this expectation of the Jews.

They could only hope to succeed in this by persuading the people that their sacred scriptures symbolized, as a hidden doctrine, what they failed to express as an open teaching.

They had previously persuaded themselves that this must be the case, and thereupon endeavoured to graft this spiritual conception of the expected Messiah on to the letter of the Law. And thenceforth the several Messiahs of the scriptures became to them official types and figures of the *O Erchomenos*, the Messiah to come, and the scriptures themselves prophetic records of the expectation of and preparation for that coming. And to this attribution their prophetic character was due.

In their endeavours so to guide the people they met with but a partial success. Nor was this surprising: for the common sense of the unlearned revolts against mysticism in every form; and the Jews were essentially a shrewd, matter-of-fact and practical people, though at times under pressure these qualities seemed wanting.

But this partial success introduced a new line of thought in connection with the expected Messiah; and enabled the teachers, while appealing to all through the universal expectation, slowly to graft a

measure of the spiritual and supernatural on to the natural view of the common object of their aspirations.

Yet even so the natural view predominated.

Hence when Cyrus released the Jews from bondage, and sent such as chose to return thither back to Palestine, he was regarded by them as the Messiah of Jehovah; and so strong was this feeling, that those who held to the supernatural view of the Messiahship were obliged to accept him as a type of the heaven-born Messiah yet to come.

Continuing to expect the *O Erchomenos*, the "He that is to come," the supernaturalizing teachers of the Jews fostered in the people the long-cherished expectation of a Messiah to be raised up by Jehovah. But, with all their efforts and all their teaching, they, as a rule, only maintained and spread amongst these the perhaps slightly modified hope and expectation that their God would give them a Messiah or King who would restore their ancient glory as a nation.

Hence at the commencement of the Christian era there was a two-fold expectation in Jewry. For while the few still looked for a supernatural, the many were expecting the advent of a natural Messiah.

The teaching of Jesus attracted the attention of both of these classes.

The few anxiously watched to see whether he would prove to be the Messiah they looked for.

But his way of life, as well as his rejection of their special doctrines, daunted them. And it was only when the so long expected Messiah otherwise failed them, and they realized that it could be attributed to him that he had died as the Lamb of Jehovah, or Paschal Lamb, and had risen again on the third day, according to the scriptures, as the Paschal Omer, or first-fruits of the coming harvest, that some ultimately accepted him as, and proclaimed him to have been, the divinely incarnate Son of Jehovah.

The many had, on his public entry into Jerusalem, acclaimed him as the son of David and long expected king of Israel.

The effect of a method of teaching under which two views of an accepted Messiahship were associated with, or maintained in, transmitted by and perpetuated through the same scriptures, was that the scriptures came to be regarded as, when not verbally, at any rate symbolically, referring to the Messiah and his future kingdom.

Hence each successive view concerning the Messiah was claimed to be drawn from, or at least supported by, scripture.

In this way a standard of expectation had been

slowly formed by the supernaturalizing teachers of the Jews ; and conformity with this standard was essential to the establishing of a claim to the Messiahship.

Owing to this, those who held conformity thereto to be the test of the validity of a given claim, would only accept a claim as valid that could be conformed to this standard. And when they had satisfied themselves as to the validity of such a claim, they would on all suitable occasions seek to confirm it by referring to the standard, and showing that certain events relating to, and certain acts performed by their accepted Messiah, occurred in succession, "according to the scriptures," or were done because "it was written," and "that the scriptures might be fulfilled."

A Messiah rising from the people, mixing with the people, and followed by the people ; a Messiah beloved by the many, the poor, the unlettered, the despised ; a Messiah acclaimed by those who clung to the natural expectation,—would certainly not be acknowledged by the few ; would not be accepted by those in whom the mystical expectation prevailed, until they had *so* satisfied themselves *under the pressure of circumstances*.

This they *could* not do until his career had been brought to a close, and could be considered and tested as a whole.

This they *would* not do until all hope of a fulfilment of their expectation through any other channel was quenched.

Such a standpoint could hardly be gained until some considerable time after the death of one so brought under their notice ; of one whose life and doctrines were forced on their consideration by the otherwise quenching of the expectation they had so long cherished. But when that standpoint had been gained ; when the learned few had accepted as the Messiah one who had previously only had unlearned followers ; when, as in the course of time would inevitably happen, they had acquired an ascendancy over these ; when they were looked up to as lights shining in darkness, their learning would become so impressive, the influence of their example so seductive, as insensibly to cause their supernatural idea of the life and mystical views of the doctrine of him whom they had at length acknowledged as the Messiah according to the scriptures, gradually to supersede and supplant any tradition of a natural teaching which ran counter to their own conceptions.

Doctrinal differences would at first necessarily have arisen between the later and mystical, and the earlier or practical teachers of the people.

In these dissensions the authority of the earlier teachers—of those who had been in close contact

with one thus transformed into the Messiah according to the scriptures, and who knew the real facts as to his life, teaching and death—would have maintained its ascendancy over the influence of those who had only a theoretical idea as to what those facts ought to have been. But as these died off, the influence of their authority would have diminished, while that of their supplanters increased, *pari passu*, until at length the latter remained in possession of the field.

These would then be tempted to suggest a doctrinal life of the now accepted Messiah in accordance with their own views.

This life, compiled in harmony with the lives of his assumed predecessors, would be attributed to one of his own disciples.

In this life they would so express the doctrines thus committed to writing, that they could be accepted as well by the followers of the actual disciples as by their own; so express them that they could be interpreted in accordance with the accepted views of their interpreter, trusting to time and oral tradition gradually to enforce the mystical while suppressing the natural sense.

In this way they would, in the long run, usurp the authority of the earlier, that of the actual disciples, for their later teaching; and, to make sure

of this, might even claim that a reconciliation had taken place between them after dissensions, which had only arisen out of misunderstandings, had been healed ; and that the belief of all had ever been the same.

While this was taking place, the influences thus brought to bear upon them would have gradually brought the writings in which the teachings of the disciples had been recorded, into harmony with the views with which they had to be reconciled.

Such a course would have been fully adequate to its purpose.

In the early progress of Christianity, such a procedure might, without rashness, be held to represent the course of events, as far as that course can be traced. And it should be borne in mind in this regard that, while some of the Christian scriptures proceeded solely from the later teachers, all of these writings passed through their hands, and are shown, by the various readings which have been recovered, *to have been tampered with for a purpose.*

What was the actual course of events?

As regards the production of the Christian scriptures, this course is revealed by the direct evidence of the preserved manuscripts.

While the meaning of its actuators is divulged by the outcome of their proceedings.

Gospels professing to contain their teaching were written even during the lives of the disciples.

Some of these were re-modelled and subjected to various changes after their deaths, and then accepted as containing that teaching.

Other Gospels appeared later ; Gospels written professedly to give an exact relation of facts which, it is thus insinuated, had been hitherto inaccurately set forth.

A history, professedly of "the Acts of the Apostles," followed, as a continuation of one of the Gospels.

Its writer was a follower of the apostle Paul ; of the apostle who was the convert of the risen Christ ; of the apostle who was the leader of the supernaturalizing teachers ; of the apostle whose vehement claim to the apostleship suggests that this claim was disputed.

In this history, while dissensions are admitted to have existed between the leader of the disciples and the apostle of the risen Christ, identity in aim, in teaching and in life, is attributed to them.

After the death of the last of the disciples, who long survived his brethren, a doctrinal Gospel was written.

This Gospel was attributed to that disciple, to give the stamp of authenticity to its teachings.

In this Gospel the views of the supernaturalizing teachers were expressed in such form that they could be accepted by all.

This was done that the oral teaching handed down with it might, by enforcing the supernatural interpretation, slowly eliminate the natural meaning attributable to the text.

Simultaneously and progressively with this, such Gospels as could be so utilized were re-modelled and moulded on the supernatural type ; and these were included in the roll of accepted and authorized scriptures.

All other Gospels, with all the earlier Christian writings which did not conform to the supernatural type, were then excluded from the approved scriptures, and, in the course of time, suppressed and destroyed as apocryphal or heretical. And the names of some five hundred such suppressed Gospels and Epistles are said to have been preserved.

But in framing the canon of scripture, apocryphal writings, such as the Epistle to the Hebrews, which set forth and confirmed the mystical views of the spiritualizing teachers, were not excluded.

The history of early Christianity—which is the history of an acquiring ascendancy after the minds of those who acquired the ascendancy—is, at the same time, the history of a doctrinal growth, whose

teachers, claiming to teach with a divine authority, established their doctrine by founding a Church.

This they affirmed they had been charged to do by the risen Christ.

The living Jesus certainly gave no such charge, and his disciples claimed no such authority.

But the same history—while showing that this Church was established by those who, through skilful organization and strict discipline, gradually acquired the ascendancy—gives an account of the conflicts of this growing Church; of its conflicts, not merely with the Jews, nor even with the civil powers, but principally with successive groups of Christians—with groups of Christians whom it called, and condemned as heretics *because they rejected certain of its doctrines*. Indeed, this history proves, as far as it establishes anything, that the earliest conflicts of Christianity were, what they still continue to be, doctrinal conflicts; and that those who—while and as they were acquiring, and after they had acquired, the ascendancy—were persecuted by the civil powers, themselves persecuted with the utmost severity all Christians who differed from them in doctrine and questioned their authority.

Such a procedure was completely foreign to the teaching of him whom they claimed as their Mes-

siah ; for he enjoined submission to the civil powers and love amongst the brotherhood.

And the love he taught by precept and enforced by example was a love which was to permit all to use his name, leaving it for himself to decide hereafter which of these were really his.

But by such a procedure a doctrine founded on the natural, and calling, re-calling thereto, could be gradually supernaturalized and insensibly superseded ; and a life which commenced in an absolutely natural way, was passed in an essentially natural manner, and was brought to an ignominiously violent close ; a life which was suffered to be brought to such a close *to maintain the right of private judgment, and the teaching that man was to be guided by God through an enlightening and enlightened conscience, and thus be made, become and be the son of God*, could, with ease and certainty, be so transformed as to be hardly recognizable.

THE MESSIANIC ATTRIBUTION.

THE Messiah, "according to the scriptures," was to be indicated by certain predestinating marks.

He was to be born of an espoused virgin, which the mother of Jesus certainly was.

But he was to be of the seed of David ; whereas the mother of Jesus, to whom alone his humanity is attributed, was cousin to one who was of the daughters of Aaron.

He was to be born in Bethlehem of Judæa ; whereas Jesus was designated as of Nazareth.

He was to be "the first-born" of the family into which he was born ; which Jesus could not have been if there is any truth in the tradition which affirms that his brethren and sisters were the children of Joseph by a former wife ; for the prerogatives of the first-born are derived, not from the mother, but from the actual or reputed father.

In accepting Jesus as the expected Messiah, the messianizing interpreters of the scriptures had to deal with these materials.

They dealt with them in two ways.

Their actuating impulse was one of compromise.

Their aim, that all might be enclosed in the network of a specious teaching, and then welded, by an authoritatively enforced tradition, into a compact organization with a consolidated doctrine.

At the outset they were met by the fact that some of the most zealous amongst themselves held that both of the official Messiahships were to be united by inheritance in the Messiah according to the scriptures.

According to these, the lineage of Aaron was to be combined in him with that of David, that he might be their hereditary high-priest and king.

Hence for these Mary was of the daughters of Aaron.

But this was insinuated rather than directly stated. And only the trace of an insinuation, which could not be consistently maintained, has been left in the Gospel of Luke, in the assertion that a daughter of Aaron was her cousin.

Was this because it came to be realized that Mary could not be numbered in two tribes; and that, under the doctrine of a divine incarnation through her instrumentality, to be of the seed of David must be the lineage of one only constructively included in the tribe of her husband?

Here at any rate came their first *crux*.

Mary could not be shown to be of the seed of David when it was recognized that this must be established.

Had this been possible, her genealogy would have been recited.

But it is not.

That is to say, it has been suppressed. For it must have existed and been known at the time of her espousals.

But if the genealogy of Mary was suppressed, it was not suppressed without a reason.

Either it testified against one or both of the lineages through which her own attributed lineage was derived, or it was not preserved *because Jesus was held to be the son of Joseph*—was so held by his own parents.

Had Joseph not believed Jesus to be his own son ; had he been satisfied that he was not the son of man, but that he had been conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, as the Christian dogma affirms,—it would have been his bounden duty to have religiously preserved a genealogy on which so much depended. And it is because he failed to preserve the genealogy of a wife to whom *as an actual wife*, his own genealogy was by marriage attributed, that the genealogy of Joseph had to serve in its place, when, no longer regarded as

the natural wife of her husband, a supernatural conception was imputed to the first-born of Mary.

In either case, the non-preservation of the genealogy of the mother of Jesus testifies against the supernatural conception, and therefore against the Messiahship, according to the scriptures, of her son. For if not the son of Joseph, Jesus has no genealogy, no proof of lineage and descent, and therefore no claim to be considered the Messiah *in that sense*.

But was Joseph of the seed of David?

Two genealogies affirm that he was. But then, on comparison, they are found to be not agreeing.

Nor is this surprising; for though Christian teachers deliberately close their eyes to the fact, these genealogies are recited by evangelists who are themselves not agreeing—by evangelists whose Gospels represent the two ways in which the messianizing interpreters of the scriptures have sought to identify the actual generation of Jesus with a pre-conceived standard of what that generation ought to have been.

In their judgment, his conception should have been preceded by the annunciation of the coming event. His birth—which must have taken place at Bethlehem of Judæa—should have been accompanied by celestial signs and supernatural phenomena, and the advent of the infant be greeted by

an adoring homage. And then the taking of the child to, and the bringing of it up at, Nazareth, a city of Galilee, had to be accounted for.

They meet these requirements in two ways.

But then, as just stated, on comparison, these two ways are found to be, like the genealogies, not agreeing.

According to Matthew, the annunciation is to Joseph, to allay his suspicions and thus vindicate the integrity of the virgin.

Mary had hitherto remained at her own home, after the custom of the Jews, as an espoused but as yet unmarried virgin.

Joseph, re-assured by the angelic message, thereupon takes her—whither?

Evidently to his own house at Bethlehem, that the child she is to bring forth may be born there as his child.

For, according to this evangelist, the birth of Jesus takes place in a house, where the wise men, magi, or kings of tradition, subsequently found the mother and child.

These, supernaturally led from the East by celestial signs, came to worship the infant, and offer it of their treasures, gold and frankincense and myrrh ; even as Nanda, warned in a dream, came, with other holy personages, to adore the newly-born Krishna

and his mother, and to remove them to a place of safety from the impending slaughter of the male children of the same age.

Then, to avoid a massacre of which contemporary history has no record, but which must have taken place, since the exigencies of prophecy and the analogies of the life of Krishna required it, the child is taken with its mother, not to Nazareth, where it would have been as safe then as later, but down into Egypt.

Nazareth was the obvious place to proceed to, had Joseph's home been held by this evangelist to have been there ; but the descent into Egypt was necessary to fulfil the prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Afterwards, on his return to Palestine, because Joseph was afraid to go to his own home at Bethlehem, he journeyed to Galilee and took up his abode at Nazareth.

But fear was not the only cause of the settlement at Nazareth.

Prophecy required that the child should be the *Netser* springing from the roots of Jesse, if it was the Messiah according to the scriptures ; and so, in ignorance or defiance of the difference in orthography, through his abode and bringing up at Nazareth this prerogative was attributed to Jesus.

Had this gospel narrative stood alone, it might have been provisionally accepted as historical.

But the evangelist Luke also gives a history of the nativity.

According to this evangelist, the annunciation was to Mary. And the virgin thereupon pays a prolonged visit to her cousin Elizabeth.

In this way the evangelist appears to prove, by force of circumstance, the supernatural conception of the infant, while passing over the distasteful suspicion of the virgin's integrity.

The allaying of this suspicion was the cornerstone on which the proof rested, according to Matthew ; for Joseph does not take the virgin home till his doubts have been removed.

But the doubts of Joseph as to the paternity of the child were not the doubts of the messianizing Christian teachers.

These sought an assurance as against Joseph himself.

His doubts could not have arisen until after her return from her visit to her cousin ; for when she paid this visit she was only a betrothed virgin, and therefore could not have been accompanied by him whose bride she was not as yet, and would not become until formally taken by him to his own home.

Hence, through this judiciously improvised visit,

an indirect and yet positive assurance was gained that the expected infant was not the son of a human father; for Joseph would not have seen its mother during that long interval: while the prolonged sojourn of the virgin with her aged cousin, and that cousin's still more aged husband, was a guarantee against the possibility of any other human parentage—a guarantee made complete by Joseph's accepting the putative paternity.

Then, according to Luke, the child was born in a stable (or as some would have it, after the Septuagint of Isaiah xxxiii. 13—19, a cave) in Bethlehem, whither Joseph had taken its mother from Nazareth to be taxed, or included in a census said to have been made about that time.

Did the Roman law require this journey for the purpose indicated? Or was this assumed necessity for a journey, of which Matthew has no knowledge, intended to give indirect support to a genealogy which the settlement at Nazareth might be held to discredit?

The birth was heralded by angelic choirs. Heaven-directed shepherds greeted the child. And afterwards, when they had performed all things according to the law of Jehovah, Joseph and Mary returned with the infant to Nazareth, because this was their own city and contained the house of Joseph.

The want of agreement here is great indeed, including as it does such direct contradictions ; but even when the two Gospels seem to be agreeing, the details of no single episode are alike.

The absolute differences, however, go even beyond direct contradiction, paradoxical as this may seem ; for the second narrative not only omits any allusion to the descent into Egypt, *it actually accounts for the whole of the time until the return to Nazareth.*

But so doing, it leaves no room for a descent of which it thus shows itself to be completely ignorant.

And yet the Gospel of Luke was professedly written that certainty might be known concerning the things with which it deals.

The one point of agreement between the two narratives is, that Jesus was brought up at Nazareth. And Jesus was of Nazareth, most certainly. All testimony agrees here.

But then was he of Nazareth that he might be called a Nazarene ?

And was he called a Nazarene under the impression that this designation would give him the right to be regarded as the predicted *Netser* of prophecy, notwithstanding and in despite of the fact that *Nat-sar* and *Nazar* differ radically from each other in Hebrew ?

But to be the Netser of prophecy, he must have been of the seed of David.

This necessity necessarily raises the question : Was Jesus of the seed of David?

This question as necessarily raises another : Was he called Jesus by his father and mother?

And then, as a necessary sequence, comes the yet further question : When he came to be called Jesus, was he so called because he was to save his people from their sins?—to save them from their sins in the dogmatic sense?

What say the Gospels in these regards?

Much by way of suggestion ; much pointing to the direction from whence the answers to these questions should be sought ; much indicating the reasonable solution of the problems out of which they have arisen.

Joseph and Mary, the father and mother of Jesus, were of Nazareth.

This is admitted by all in the present day, even with the first Gospel before them.

They are held not to have been natives of that city, however ; though why they or their parents migrated thither does not appear.

Fear of returning to and settling in Judæa has evidently been an improvised reason ; a reason growing out of the improvisation it is supposed to

follow or has been advanced to support ; a reason, moreover, improvised by one ignorant that the home of Joseph was in Galilee.

They may have migrated thither because they had ceased to regard that which was peculiar in the Jewish law as needful of observance.

They may have selected and retired to this lawless or heretical place because it was an heretical place ; for that was the meaning of the term lawless amongst the Jews.

They may, therefore, well have taken up their abode there that their own lawlessness, or disregard of Jewish observances, might be unobserved.

But if so, whence did they migrate ?

Nazareth is not far from the confines of Asher.

Migration from that territory would, therefore, have been very easy, and but little likely to attract attention.

Is it possible that they were of that tribe ?

Such seems to have been the belief of the venerable Simeon when, on the presentation of the infant in the temple, he, according to an ancient tradition, declared (in the words preserved and rendered, "for a sign which shall be spoken against") that this child was born under the sign Sagittarius.

Now the sign Sagittarius was the emblem borne on the standard of the tribe of Asher.

Hence for a Jew to say that a child was born under this sign, was to declare that it was an offshoot of that tribe.

And then the recorded presence of the aged Anna, also of that tribe, on which an otherwise unaccountable stress is laid, becomes at once intelligible. She was the second witness required by the law to the truth of that to which testimony has been given; and it can hardly be doubted that her entrance, or rather uprising, here was intentionally placed on record to confirm the declaration made by Simeon, and give it a quasi-legal force.

Another indication as to the pertinence of this declaration is found in the interjected warning to Mary—"Yea, and a sword (more accurately, a lance, javelin or dart) shall pierce through thine own soul"—in which the piercing, as by an arrow, was evidently suggested by the symbolism of the sign.

One thing is clear, that whether this narrative be historical or mythical, whether those who included it in the Gospel were or were not conscious of its actual meaning, they have preserved therein, in a maimed and veiled form, the substance of a tradition which affirmed that Jesus was of the tribe of Asher, and therefore a descendant of the son of Jacob, whose name signified "Happy" or "Blessed."

But once admitting that Jesus may have been of

the tribe of Asher, it becomes equally admissible that his name may have originally been *Isuah*, *Isuai* or *Jesui* (after whom the Jesuites were designated, Numb. xxvi. 44), for these were patronymics of the tribe.

With such materials to deal with, the work of the messianizing interpreters was, so to say, done to their hands; for the transformations required were so slight as to be only too easily overlooked.

There would remain to them, of course, adverse traditions to attemper, supplant or suppress; such traditions as that Joseph and Mary were lawless, in the Jewish, that is in the Jehovistic sense.

But how easy was it to do this! The simple statement here, that the parents of Jesus went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover, was sufficient.

And yet if Jesus went to Jerusalem every year, he ought to have met his cousin, the Baptist, on these occasions.

The fact that Jesus and John meet as strangers on the banks of the Jordan; that when later they speak of each other, they do so as of strangers, in seeming ignorance as well of the ties of blood—Did these exist?—as of the spiritual and mystical liens which are held to have bound them; and that while their doctrines are divergent, their practice widely

differs,—gives a complete contradiction to this statement.

Instructive side-lights such as these obtrude themselves at every step in the comparison of the gospel histories of the nativity—side-lights which show *that every statement was made with a motive and advanced for a purpose*; and when the tendencies of the age in which the Gospels originated is taken into account,—when the very suggestive picture of the outcome of those tendencies, which can be drawn from the apocryphal Gospels and other contemporaneous writings, is considered and reduced to its true proportions,—their real value—*that of false witnesses awaiting cross-examination*—becomes very apparent.

The fact is, that the more closely the gospel narratives are examined, the more clearly does their falsifying character appear; the more distinctly does the doctrinal character of their falsifying elements manifest itself.

And yet these gospel narratives were the instruments by which Eastern and Western views were brought together, and the thus and thence derived Christianity was moulded into doctrinal form and acquired supernatural characteristics.

THE MIRACULOUS CONCEPTION.

“Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying: Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us” (Matt. i. 22, 23).

“A virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Isaiah vii. 14).

What virgin?

The Hebrew says, “The virgin.” Therefore a virgin designated at the time and indicated by the context; the virgin to which the speaker referred him whom he addressed.

“And thou”—so says the Hebrew—“shalt call his name Immanuel” (Is. vii. 14).

The person addressed was to name the child. Therefore this person had the right to do so, and consequently was espoused to the virgin, and the predicated father of the promised son.

The text speaks of the mother that is to be as an espoused virgin, for it calls her *Ha-Halmah*; that

is to say, it applies to her a designation used to distinguish "the espoused virgin" as well from *Ha-Naharah*, "the immature" or youthful, and *Ha-Bethulah*, "the mature (but unespoused) virgin," as from *Ha-Callah*, "the bride," and *Ha-Ishshah*, "the wife." Hence it in no way assumes that she is to conceive supernaturally. Neither does it give her as the type of one who is hereafter so to conceive.

The virgin of the text was an espoused virgin; a virgin about to be, but not yet married to her affianced husband.

Now a virgin on her marriage becomes "a virgin wife," because married "from her virginity;" and is entitled to be distinctively so called, as well as "a virgin mother," on producing offspring. And her children, because born of a virgin wife, would be virgin-born, and have the right to, and upon occasion would actually, be called the children of a virgin mother; and her eldest or first-born son would, as a matter of course, be the first-born son of a virgin—which would be his proper and distinctive designation. And yet even so, the prerogatives of the first-born would not accrue unto him unless he were also the first-born son of his father, from whom alone the privileges of birthright are derived.

This child of promise was given as a sign. As a sign of what?

It would appear, on considering the terms in which the promise and the sign are given, that Achaz had been recently espoused to a virgin not otherwise named or spoken of; and that on her marriage this virgin was to conceive of and bear unto her husband this child of promise.

Under these circumstances Isaiah called her the virgin; knowing that he would be, as he was, perfectly understood.

The sign given by the prophet did not, therefore, concern the manner of conception, and could not be prophetic *in that regard*. Indeed, as given, it was not intended to be prophetic in any sense. Its fulfilment was to indicate that God accepted the terms of a particular promise if the conditions of that promise were fulfilled by him to whom it was given.

It centred in the child, as the result of the union of its father and mother; and the nature of the promise, as confirmed by the fulfilment of the sign, was expressed by the name to be given to the child—Immanuel.

This name is interpreted by the evangelist, "God with us." And he has rightly so interpreted it.

But then it means "God with us" in a particular sense—the sense in which it was used by the prophet. This is certainly not the sense the evangelist

infers and desires should be drawn from it—expressly so declares indeed.

The meaning here, as first symbolized, is to be seen in and realized through the union of father and mother.

In this union God will be held to have taken part if the promised sign results. And through this conjoint union the sign given in the child is to be read and interpreted.

It points to and predicts a coming union in which God is to take part.

The nature of this union is to be gathered from the circumstances under which the promise, which has been converted into a prophecy, was made; while the character and bearing of the sign are learnt from a significant fact connected with it.

Now that the sign given by the prophet was to confirm a promise, and was not meant to be prophetic in the way the evangelist assumes and asserts—that it was a sign given to the king, and not intended to have a wider application—is seen from the associated fact just referred to.

This important fact is, that the accomplishment of the sign in the actual birth of the promised child is not recorded.

This omission must have been made because the sign only concerned him to whom the promise

was given. It certainly is remarkable that no mention is subsequently made of this child, which, with its mother, remains unknown or unidentified, notwithstanding or perhaps because of the significant name it was to bear.

The natural inference from this silence would be, either that the child was not born—in which case no sign was given by God, and the prophet's words were falsified ; or the child was born and named as directed, but not further mentioned—because the sign was accomplished in it, and had no further and remote bearing attributed to it.

Under either view the messianic character of this promised sign and the prophetic value given to it disappear.

The sign was given to confirm a promise of a fruitful union between God and such of his chosen people as placed their sole trust in him, and, hearkening to his voice, sought no other alliances.

The circumstances under which it was given were these.

Syria was confederate with Ephraim to war against Jerusalem, whose king and people were shaken with fear as trees by the wind (Is. vii. 2). Because of this, Isaiah was sent to the king to bid him neither to fear nor be faint-hearted, and to assure him that the confederation against him shall

not stand, and that what the confederates propose shall not come to pass (vv. 4—7). Upon being doubted, he adds, "If ye will not (*taaminu*) believe, surely ye shall not (*teomenu*) be established" (ver. 9).

In this warning there is an alliterative and quasi-oracular play, which permeates the dialogue and is carried into the name Immanuel; but this play upon the words used in the Hebrew necessarily disappears in a translation.

There is, indeed, a double play here—one upon the words referred to; the other upon the ideas "association" and "union," "confederation" and "conspiracy" (including their opposites), coupled with them.

Then Achaz, still overcome by doubt and hesitation, is told to ask for a sign; and, on his refusing so to tempt Jehovah, has this sign given to him.

The meaning and interpretation of the sign, as used by the prophet, is stated by himself (viii. 9—12). They are, that Achaz and his people are not to seek for security in alliances, but to put their trust in, and so invite and secure a confederation with, Jehovah; and that they are to fear him, not those confederated against themselves, when he will form a confederacy with them and be their sanctuary; and will shield them from hostile alliances and conspiracies; and will enable them to feel contempt

for their enemies, and to exclaim in exultation, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces (disunited). . . . Take counsel (conspire) together, and it shall come to nought ; speak the word (of agreement), and it shall not stand : for God is with us."

But such a meaning and interpretation had nothing to do with, and could in no sense foreshadow, a divine incarnation.

And yet, though so to use it was to abuse the scriptures, the evangelist has unintentionally and unconsciously done good service by associating the giving of this sign with the conception and birth of Jesus ; for he has thus drawn attention to a remarkable Hebrew usage and idiom. And the right understanding of this usage and idiom will show at a glance the nature of the error into which he has suffered himself to be betrayed, and is still by his Gospel continually seeking to betray.

Three classes of wives were in those days known in Israel.

Those who, like Anna (Luke ii. 36), were married "from their virginity" or as virgins.

Those who were married as widows.

Those (of whom the number was considerable) who were married after divorce.

Of these, the first formed the highest grade.

These were, by way of distinction, designated "virgin wives."

The title, "virgin wife," as well as its correlative, "virgin mother," accrued to this class of wives from the circumstances under which they entered the marriage state, and not from their own physical condition.

This will be recognized when it is remembered that virgins were espoused at a very early age amongst the Jews; and that then the marriage had to be deferred for years.

Hence it often happened that the husband to whom the "virgin child" had been espoused died before marriage took place.

And in these cases the child to which he had been espoused became a widow, and, on a future marriage, though a virgin, did not rank as a "virgin wife," as one who had married "from her virginity."

Owing to this peculiar usage, the title "virgin," as applied to a wife or mother, was a technical designation; a designation simply denoting the social rank of her on whom it was conferred; a designation whose significance was then well understood by, and whose verbal meaning could deceive no one amongst the Jews.

Hence, when Joseph married the virgin Mary, to whom he had been previously espoused, she, as his

wife, was still entitled to be called "the virgin" upon occasion ; and would be so called when her *status* had to be formally or was otherwise declared.

Hence, again, had Joseph after his marriage been met by a prophet and formally addressed in the words, "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus," he would have known that the virgin meant by the prophet was his own recently married wife. And he most certainly would not have supposed that anything supernatural was to be attributed to the conception, but at once understood the prophet to mean that his "virgin wife" was to conceive by and bear a son unto himself.

Or had Joseph met a friend and said to him, "The virgin has conceived ;" or had he been met by a friend and asked, "Has the virgin conceived ?" (and this was a subject in which, amongst the Jews, the friends of the recently married always took interest, and about which they often inquired), either would have understood that the other was speaking of or asking concerning the virgin, Mary, "the virgin wife" of Joseph.

And hence yet again, when the virgin, Mary, the wife Joseph had married "from her virginity," conceived of and brought forth a son unto her husband, in the order of God's providence, she would have

been, as she was called, "the virgin mother," and her son would have been known as the "son of the virgin."

But no one hearing them so called would have attributed a supernatural meaning to the designations. To all Jews the significance would have been, was, clear ; the sense purely natural.

That such were the circumstances and conditions under which the conception and birth of Jesus took place, who, after due reflection, can doubt? That they were wholly natural, and the designations accruing under them naturally derived, and referring to then well understood and ordinary relations, who will now be disposed to call in question?

But when the circumstances, relations and surroundings of the wholly natural conception and birth of Jesus were lost sight of, and the Hebrew idioms expressing them came to be dealt with by those ignorant of their historic value, could these, with their preconceived doctrinal views, forbear from betraying themselves into very grave errors?

They found that by tradition the mother of Jesus was called "the Virgin Mary;" and that her son was, by the same tradition, termed "the son of the Virgin."

Interpreting these designations through doctrines they had received from other, from Eastern sources

what was easier for them than, through the distinctive titles thus ready made, so to say, for their purpose, to attribute a supernatural character to the conception and birth of Jesus, and thus transform him into the Messiah they had expected "according to the scriptures"—the Messiah *who had otherwise failed them?*

And then, starting from this as the corner-stone of the fabric they were erecting, what more simple than on these lines to lay the foundations of a supernatural Christianity, in which the few remembered facts and acts of the life and death of this first-born son of a virgin mother were, as remembered and related or traditionally handed down, duly explained and satisfactorily accounted for?

That these were the circumstances and conditions under which the supernaturalizing interpreters of the scriptures laid the foundations of a supernatural Christianity, it will be found, as will presently appear, difficult to call in question.

THE ENLIGHTENING CONSCIENCE.

JESUS was a perfect man. This is a dogma of the Christian faith. Perfect God and perfect man, so says the Athanasian Creed.

But as a perfect man he could have had no knowledge of his Godhead ; could have called upon none to believe that he was God ; would have had no right to do so ; could not have proved that he was divine in any sense other than that in which man could become and be divine.

Nor, even granting that he was the Son of God in a supernatural sense—that he was more than a divine character, that he was a divine personage—was it necessary that he should know this.

But supposing that he had this knowledge, would it have been for the benefit of man that he should communicate it to others ?

His mission was that of a man to men. His object, to show them how to live, by himself living up to, and so reducing to practice, the teaching he imparted—that, by living as he did, man might

acquire his doctrine practically, and so gain the habit of living the life he led as well as taught.

Had he known himself to be more than man, had he been superhuman and been himself aware of the fact, he would have suppressed that knowledge—because to call upon the human to lead the life of a superhuman would have been to invite the response that such a life was as much beyond its power as was the superhuman above the human.

Jesus was perfectly human in every respect, to show in his own life what the human could attain to—what it ought to be. He was a perfect man. Hence as a perfect man he was liable to error—for to err is human.

Nay, to be a perfect man is to be submitted to error; to be subject to error (within certain limits) in his search for the truth; for to fall into error from time to time is to acquire experience, to gain the knowledge of good and evil, and thus be led step by step through a gradually enlightening to an enlightened conscience.

It was as necessary to Jesus as to any of his brethren that his conscience should be *so* enlightened—that through the light he thus acquired he might give light to the world.

Hence it was necessary that he should, from time to time, fall into error—that his conscience might

be enlightened on those points concerning which the errors he fell into showed that it needed enlightenment.

But then error is not sin.

The recognition, with a view to the subsequent avoidance, of error, is the process by which conscience is enlightened ; and each error, so recognized and avoided, marks a stage in the advancing enlightenment.

Sin is not what it has been made unto the Jews, the breaking of a revealed and arbitrary law. It is the persistence in error after that error has been recognized as such by the enlightened conscience. Such persistence corrupts and falsifies the nature of man, and unfits it for the right, the true and the good.

Jesus fell into error, from time to time, that his conscience might be formed and enlightened in a natural way ; in a way conformed to the perfect and therefore perfectable nature of his manhood.

A series of such errors can be traced in the Gospels, with their successive effects upon him ; and through these errors and their consequences, rightly read, understood and interpreted, the meaning of his life and true character of his teaching, so long lost sight of, can be recovered—for *they point to the gradual clearing up of his divine aspirations.*

The first indication in this regard, the first guide to the religious bent of his mind, is to be drawn from the consideration of the influences to which his childhood and youth were submitted.

Admitting that he was a superhuman who had voluntarily become human for a purpose, then his parentage, with all the consequences flowing therefrom, would have been of his own choice.

That parentage was remarkable.

The father and mother of Jesus were Jews, who for reasons, whatever those reasons may have been, lived in a lawless, that is a non-conforming or heretical neighbourhood— a neighbourhood so regardless of the Jewish Law that it could be said thereof, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?

The inference therefore is, that they lived there by preference, and because they were themselves non-conformists or lawless in the Jewish sense.

But, so viewed, they must have been upright and conscientious and truly religious, in their own way, to have trained such a son; for his mind must, in its tendencies, have been in a degree a reflection of theirs.

It is remarkable of Jesus that, according to the Gospels, the only occasion on which he illustrated his teaching through the levitical, the priestly character, is in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

This is significant, for it must be remembered that the Samaritan of the parable is called good, not by way of comparison with other Samaritans, but to contrast his charity with the hardened indifference of the priest and the Levite; for the Samaritans were despised and hated by the Jews, who refused to have any communication with them. And yet, despite his imputed irreligion, his charity exalts him above the priestly orders.

This is doubly significant as typical of the nature of the doctrine of Jesus, when associating that doctrine with the history of his life. This is a history of the hostility of the priests and their upholders to himself—a hostility of which his doctrine was the cause.

His training must have been such as prepared him to commence his mission life as a religious but non-conforming Jew with ascetic tendencies. And this training led him into a series of very instructive errors, beginning with his public entry on that life.

The first of these was his reception of the baptism of John.

The Baptist was an ascetic non-conforming Jew, to whose baptism prominence has been given for a purpose; for the only peculiarity therein, apart from its reception by Jesus, was its unorthodox character.

His name, John, at the import of which—"the

doer of penance," "the teacher of penance"—the Jews marvelled, predicated his life and doctrine.

His non-conformity and his asceticism formed the double attraction which drew Jesus to him ; which led Jesus to seek the baptism of John, thus to become his disciple. Yes, to become his disciple ; for it must be remembered, in this regard, that receiving baptism was then, as it is now, the formal act of accepting discipleship ; and that those who received the baptism of John were thus made and so became his disciples.

But to become his disciple was not merely to embrace the principles, accept the teaching and imitate the life of the Baptist. It was the act of admitting his right to teach, of professing subjection to his authority.

Jesus by baptism would have made himself a disciple of John. This was his first recorded formal error.

Sprung from parents who were lax observers of the Law, and yet religious ; like his parents, a lax observer of the Law and an early objector thereto—for it is recorded of him that he questioned concerning the Law or called it in question at the age of twelve years—and yet religious ; when he decided on receiving the baptism of John—a baptism of which the scribes and Pharisees could not say

whether it was or was not of God, though in their hearts they condemned it—he must have been moved by an impulse unfavourable to orthodox Judaism.

Hence in becoming the disciple of John he openly protested against orthodox Judaism, and in so far separated himself therefrom.

This baptism was the turning-point in the life of Jesus.

It was an error; an error of which the ever-watchful spirit of the earth was prepared to take advantage.

This spirit, the prince of this world and virtual god thereof; this spirit, which thinks that it is God because it knows no other; this spirit, which personates God in regard to man, because it possesses the power of a god on the earth, its kingdom, seeing in Jesus a great capacity for spiritual development, at once took advantage of his error, and caused a spirit to descend upon and, dove-like, to hover over him, and a voice from heaven—a *Bath Kol*, whose utterances were, according to the Talmud, not uncommon in those days—to proclaim, "This is my beloved Son."

But Jesus, simultaneously warned by a quickening conscience that he was the Son of God and must therefore not become the disciple of man, at

once withdrew from the discipleship he had sought, and retired into the solitude of the desert.

Thus, through the effects and consequences of this, his first formal error, did Jesus learn that the children of God should not become the disciples of man—*because human mediation was an offence against the divine Fatherhood.*

Sorrowing in the desert for the error he had committed in receiving the baptism of John, Jesus now, in the spirit of penance and by way of expiation, fasted forty days and forty nights.

This was his second formal error.

Brought by this fast once more under the notice of the spirit of the earth, he was then sorely tempted.

From the character of this temptation and its influence upon himself, due to the effects of his prolonged fast, he, again under the guidance of that inner monitor, his quickening conscience, learnt that fasting and asceticism predisposed to separation from God ; and attracted the spirit which was not, which acted against, which drew those who submitted to its leading from, God.

Warned by this lesson, he gave up the practice of fasting, with the asceticism which had induced it—gave these up so decidedly as to be called upon occasion a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.

Thus did Jesus, guided by a quickening con-

science, learn through his own errors; learn that he must on no account become a disciple of man; must not suffer human mediation, mediation of any kind, to come between himself and his divine Father; and that he must not practise asceticism, must not seek to expiate errors or to atone for them by way of expiation. And this he learnt by perceiving that each and all of these acts, persevered in, set barriers to the divine action which builds up the soul of man, and attract the attention and draw down the influence of the spirit that is not God.

Yet a third formal error is recorded of Jesus.

Called out of Judaism, he did not at once realize this call as a summons to give up all formal, all revealed or mediately taught religion.

Hence he for a moment thought his mission a mission of recall; thought that he was to recall man to the primitive religion of the book of Genesis, of which the first-born was the ministering agent.

His first follower, Simon, had been called Peter, which in Hebrew means "first-born," because he had been the first to give up all and follow him.

Under the view of the reformatory and restorative character of his mission, Jesus, on a memorable occasion, gave a momentary expression to this fleeting aspect of his teaching in the words addressed to Peter of which so much has since been made.

Peter, in response to a question of Jesus, had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," thereby showing that he had not yet grasped the relations of the Christhood to the divine Sonship, and realized that the one was antagonistic to the other.

To this, Jesus replied, "Thou art the Peter, and upon this, the Peter, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

In these words, while passing over and setting aside and so abolishing the Christhood to his followers, he thought to replace it by a domestic agency against which not even death, symbolized by its gaping jaws, the grave, or gates of hell, should prevail.

But warned by the immediate effect of this announcement on Peter, as interpreted through his quickening conscience, he was at once undeceived, and in this way learnt that it formed no part of his work to replace that which he was setting aside. Indeed, as he then saw or very speedily realized, to have attempted to replace the temple and its worship by a synagogue or church, even on the type of the family or congregation, would have been merely to substitute one system of mediate action for another, and he therefore never founded the Church he had said that he would build.

Thus was Jesus led, step by step, to see that the acceptance of the doctrine of the divine Sonship of man, to which he had been called and of which he had been made the exemplar, involved the absolute renunciation of every form of mediation, and left the child of God in the hands of his divine Father ; left him face to face with that Father, between whom and himself nothing—whether in the super-human, supernatural or spiritual order, whether temple, church or priest (all media of spirit action)—should come.

Thus was the conscience of Jesus gradually enlightened by natural means, by the experiences of life gained through errors inadvertently fallen into ; even as the conscience of man continues to be enlightened to this day.

Thus can the leading doctrine of Jesus be shown from his life to have been, that man was to follow the guidance of his enlightened conscience, and leave the gradual enlightenment of that conscience to God, who keeps the leading of his children in his own hands, and never fails to those who put their trust solely in him.

THE MISSION OF AFFECTION.

BUT little is known of the early life of Jesus.

Of his domestic life, absolutely nothing.

The only record of the former says that in his childhood as he grew he waxed strong in spirit.

But this is also said of the Baptist, and is evidently intended to suggest that the same influence was acting in both. Indeed, indications are not wanting which show that efforts were being persistently if cautiously made to override the tradition of the want of agreement between Jesus and John, as in Matt. iv. 17, where the former is made to commence his preaching in the same words as the latter (Matt. iii. 2), thus to insinuate that their doctrine was identical, and so conceal the antagonism of their teaching.

To this was added of Jesus that he was filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was on him; and further, that as he increased in stature he increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man—which is the natural way of progressive ad-

vance in the human ; and then, finally, it is said that he was subject to his parents.

Jesus was subject to his parents. This is the sum of the knowledge that has been handed down of the early life of Jesus. This is the first example set forth in that life—as though to show that by subjection to his human parents he was prepared for, that through subjection to his human parents he learnt the need of, subjection to his divine Father.

To his parents, therefore, and the little that is known of them, we must turn for such further insight into that early life as may be attainable.

Now it is said of his parents that they went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.

That they did this, however, may well be questioned, since any such action would have been in contradiction to the indications that they were lax observers of the Law, or non-conforming Jews who had settled in a lawless neighbourhood that their own lawlessness might not attract attention.

It may be questioned, however, for another reason ; for it is also said of Joseph that when he went up to Bethlehem, under a decree of Cæsar Augustus, to be enrolled there with his betrothed wife, he was obliged to take her to a stable because there was no room for them in the inn. Now, setting aside the

fact that Joseph, as a Jew, could not have taken a betrothed wife anywhere, as this would have been contrary to Jewish custom, to Jewish law, and her parents or guardians were responsible for her safe keeping, had he been in the habit of going every year to Jerusalem, he would have kept up his tribal relationship, and so would have had at least some one relative or friend to whom he could have taken an actual wife under such circumstances. But, indeed, it is questionable whether any such crowding could have taken place then as was habitual at the time of the Passover, since, under such a decree, there would have been a general movement which would have done much to equalize the distribution of the ordinary population. And yet nothing is said of the difficulty of finding quarters at the annual Paschal visit.

The statement that the parents of Jesus went up to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover was evidently made with a double intention.

To overcome and cast out the tradition of lawlessness which still clung to the memories of the home at Nazareth.

To give occasion for the finding of Jesus in the temple—the account of which immediately follows.

Jesus had been dead for a considerable time when these adapted traditions had been adopted and

written, and had already been accepted by their framers and writers as the Messiah according to the scriptures.

As the Messiah according to the scriptures, everything done in his regard, or by him, must have been done according to the Law, and that the scriptures might be fulfilled. He must, therefore, have been trained in the obedience of the Law, of which, as a matter of course, his parents must have been strict observers.

Such was the view of the messianic and messianizing Christians.

Such statements as these were the means by which they enforced this view, and caused it to supersede and supplant the actual facts.

Now the mixing up of the histories of the lives of Krishna, of Gautama Buddha and of Jesus, by supplementing the little that was known concerning the latter with certain received traditions in regard to the former, is very instructive. It shows that the messianic and messianizing Christians, through whose instrumentality this mixed and adapted life was handed down, must have had access to Eastern tradition, to Eastern doctrine; and that guided by these, whether misleading or misled, they blended the lives and doctrines attributed to Krishna, to Gautama and to Jesus, as those of the historic or

traditional Christ, their Messiah according to the scriptures.

It is related of the early life of Gautama, that he was presented in the temple at the age of twelve years, when he astonished all by his wisdom and questioning.

It is related of the early life of Jesus, that lost at the age of twelve years, lost far from home on the road from Jerusalem to Nazareth, lost by his parents—a loss whose significance is very suggestive—he was, after a three days' search, found by them in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, who were astonished at his understanding and answers.

The analogies here are very suggestive. It seems incredible that the loss, and especially the finding, of Jesus should have happened as related. It is incredible as one in a series of such coincidences. Hence no credit can be given to this messianic tradition.

But discredit here is followed by the discredit of the process by which the loss and the finding of Jesus are accounted for, and consequently by the discredit of the annual visit to Jerusalem; and we are thus left face to face with the indications which show that the home at Nazareth was a home of the lax observance of the Law.

Hence the only teaching to be drawn from these discredited incidents is, that Jesus even in his early youth called the Law in question, or questioned concerning it.

But there was a motive for the invention of this by no means idle tale; for its attribution, as an episode in his life, to the child Jesus.

The tradition that Jesus had called the Law in question at a very early age was wide-spread and well accredited.

It was essential that this tradition should be superseded, supplanted and suppressed.

What more certain way of doing this could be devised than that of transforming the tradition into one in which he simply questioned or asked questions concerning the Law?

What more natural way than the one so ingeniously devised and transmitted in the gospel narrative?

What more obvious than the source from which this was derived, adapted to its purpose and moulded into permanent shape?

Yes, the messianic and messianizing Christians drew their traditions and traditional expectations, with their modes of realization, from Eastern sources.

To them, Jesus was the Messiah according to the scriptures, because otherwise their so long-expected Messiah had failed them.

Hence, either consciously or unconsciously, they read allusions in his life through incidents in the lives of those they had regarded as his predecessors, and thus inextricably blended these as a single whole.

When it is realized that Jesus was in no sense the Messiah according to the scriptures, that the messianic and messianizing Christians were not his followers, and that their doctrines were not his doctrines, the side-lights of the Gospels become far more important than their direct statements.

Now the side-lights of the Gospels show glimpses of the domestic life of Jesus which give that life a very different aspect from that usually imputed thereunto; an aspect as significant as instructive, since it restores its human proportions to the super-human production of the messianizing founders of Christianity.

The teachings of Jesus were opposed to the teachings of the Jewish Law.

That there was danger in proclaiming in Jewry doctrines contrary to the Jewish Law, is shown by the vindictive close of the life of Jesus, so soon after his open avowal and teaching of heterodoxy.

That this danger was recognized by his mother is very plainly set forth by her following him, with his brethren, to take him under control on the plea,

as would appear, of insanity. And it was the recognition of this intention which caused Jesus, while disclaiming their right to interfere with his teaching, to proclaim the wider scope of his sympathies.

This incident has a double significance.

It indicates that the parents of Jesus were aware of the danger of manifesting a want of orthodoxy ; and thus explains their retirement to Nazareth, and retention of their son in that retirement till his father's death.

It illustrates the strong affection of his mother, who, with a sorrowful heart, sought to save his life through the assumed necessity of placing him under restraint.

Does it give a third lesson—that his mother did not attribute to him a supernatural conception ; did not consider him a superhuman being? Had she done so, she would not have attempted to interfere with the course of his life, however much she might have instinctively shrunk from what she foresaw must be its inevitable close.

From this incident we learn that the mother of Jesus had strong affections.

So also had her son. But these affections were essentially human in their origin and expression.

The affectionate terms on which he lived with his disciples prove this.

That he did not choose these appears from a passage in the apocryphal *Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea*, which states that Judas was the nephew and paid spy of Caiaphas from the beginning ; and that he simply followed Jesus that he might discover his breaches of the law and betray him into the hands of those who sought his death.

That Jesus should have chosen Judas to be the son of perdition was morally impossible. But if Judas was a simple follower of Jesus, so also must have been the rest. The twelve, therefore, can only have been those who followed him throughout his teaching life.

The terms of affectionate familiarity on which he lived with these his voluntary followers, whose affection for him won his affection in return, are shown by the several names he gave them.

These names were not given formally, as Christian names have been ever since, but were suggested by some incident associated with their joint lives. In this way he called Simon by the Hebrew cognomen Peter, or first-born, because he was the first to follow him. It is true that the messianizing Christians repudiated this derivation of the name, and endeavoured to make out that Simon was named *Cephas*, and that *Petros* was merely a translation of this word, whose meaning was to be read through *Petra*,

"a rock," in order to base a special and highly important doctrine on it. But even they, with all their ingenuity, could not get over the fact that Simon was always called and spoken of as Peter during his lifetime. They were able ultimately to change the received meaning of the word, and veil the significance of its origin under their attributed derivation. And that was all.

In the same way he called the sons of Zebedee *Boan-erges*, or Sons of Thunder, because they had sought to call down fire from heaven upon the villages that refused to receive him; and Thomas *Didymus*, because of his affectionate and clinging disposition. And it should be carefully remembered that these names were not formally given as Christian names, as already stated; for Jesus never baptized any of his followers, as is distinctly declared in the Gospels, not even Peter. And this fact was so vividly recollected that it could not be set aside. They were in each case drawn forth by intimacy, through circumstances, and were in reality marks of his affectionate regard.

And then, again, the childlike and playful affection they bore him stands out in bold relief in the endearing name they gave him, Jesus, "Saviour." And they changed his actual name, whatever that name may have been, into Jesus, not because he

had freed them from their sins—that is, in the doctrinal and dogmatic sense, for he had done so indirectly in lifting from them the heavy burden of the Law—but because he had freed their consciences from the trammels of that Law, and themselves from the mediation and domination of its priests.

They also, in the same playful way, called him their Christ—the Christ ; because by emancipating them from the authority of the Jewish Christhood or priests, of the Jewish Christ or high-priest, he had become the Christ to them.

Not that he became the Christ to them by transferring the Christhood to himself. For he never assumed the office of Christ in any way ; never was a formal Christ. He simply became the Christ to them by, of and through himself, abolishing the Christhood thenceforth to his followers.

Could one *so* called the Christ have permitted himself to be regarded as the Christ in any other sense ?

Only to the messianizing Christians would this have seemed possible.

But then they were bound to affirm that he considered himself, was called and was, the Christ in the messianic sense ; for this was the corner-stone of their position.

Hence they could not but seek to supernatural-

ize and spiritualize the traditional history of "the Saviour;" and in so doing, they found in these familiar designations the materials ready made to their hands, as they had previously done in the distinctive and characteristic titles of his virgin mother.

And they only too successfully did their work; only too successfully travestied the domestic life of Jesus by giving it a formal and, so to say, super-human character.

But so succeeding, they as successfully beguiled the successors of the simple followers of Jesus, whose inheritance they had thus tampered with, distorted and, as far as possible, destroyed.

Jesus had a special affection for Peter; visited him at his own home; was probably in the habit of occasionally staying with him there, when seeking repose from his pilgrimages.

But so doing, he showed how much he valued domestic affection. For Peter was a married man, whose wife's mother abode with him.

That he had a special affection for John is not so apparent—the Gospel written in the name of that disciple to the contrary notwithstanding. Indeed, the designation Boan-erges, Sons of Thunder, given conjointly to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, hardly countenances such a view, since they were evidently so named in reproof for having wished to

call down lightning from heaven to destroy the villages that would not receive Jesus and his disciples. It is much more probable that he preferred Thomas to John, as the name Didymus, which he gave to that disciple, in a measure indicates. But this has been veiled, as a part of the manifest effort of the messianizing Christians to exalt John above the other disciples, and even to set him before Peter by the suggestion that he was the first to follow Jesus. But the name Peter, first-born, is a complete answer to this claim. That John was the reputed author of the fourth Gospel is not without significance in this regard.

The affection of Jesus for Lazarus and his sisters, and more especially for Mary, was very great.

To Mary it has been most unjustly imputed that she had led an immoral life; and owing to this imputation, a derogatory meaning has been attributed to the designation which subsequently became her distinctive appellation. But as it was similarly said by the Jews, of the mother of Jesus, that she had been guilty of immorality, this does not count for much.

These charges were, in each instance, made for a similar reason, to make it appear that they were not worthy of the position attributed to them, but which they, none the less, naturally held.

It is probable that Mary Magdalene was technically unclean, because, as a worker in hair, she was liable to handle the hair of the dead.

It is possible that she received her cognomen because she was of Magdala.

But it is much more likely that she was called the Magdalene because she was "exalted" by the affection of Jesus.

This affection was very great ; but, like his general affection for his followers, like his special affection for individuals amongst them, was natural in its source and character ; wholly natural in its origin, growth and development ; natural, and not supernatural.

He spent the last six months of his life, from the feast of Tabernacles to his crucifixion, with the family of Lazarus in their home at Bethany.

This is beyond contradiction, for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem took place during this festival, as its surroundings and attendant circumstances fully prove ; and this prolonged interval gave ample opportunity for the maturing of the affection it drew out. But his premature death prevented its attaining to its natural fruition.

Even in his religious feelings his affections were so strong, so human, that he seems to have clung, almost to the last, to the hope of a reformation in

Judaism, and a return of the Jews to that simplicity of faith to which his teaching pointed.

His triumphal entry into Jerusalem evidently was, as its associated incidents show, his first visit to the holy city; and it was by what he saw and learnt through this visit, and by his experience of the temple worship and practice, that he was fully roused to the whole truth.

By this experience was revealed to him, through it he realized, that he, and with him every child of God, was called upon and required to renounce and separate himself from the teachings of all revealed and the practices of all formal religion.

The messianizing Christians have cast a halo of supernaturalism and a glow of spiritualism round all these incidents of the life of Jesus; have designedly done so in order thus to make him their Messiah according to the scriptures; and when, in carrying out the transformation they had thus undertaken, circumstances seemed to require it, have not hesitated to impute a degraded natural character to one to whom he was devotedly attached. They did this in order to attribute to that attachment a solely supernatural basis, and detach it from the sphere of the affections. But such a doing must have been actuated by motives as unworthy as the methods employed were culpable. It succeeded,

however, and Mary Magdalene, though esteemed as a great saint, has been none the less regarded by the Christian world ever since as simply a miracle of penitence, whom Jesus had condescended to compassionate, and from whom he had cast out seven devils.

But in so supernaturalizing, they have de-naturalized the whole life of Jesus ; de-humanized it, so to say, and distorted its teaching character.

This was at all points a call, or rather a recall, from the spiritual and supernatural to the natural. And the expression of this recall was centred in the domestic affections ; because by the development of these affections, and through the uses of life this development produces, and the quality of life it fashions, can the divine human alone be reached. For in the divine human, the human is not de-humanized that it may become divine. Neither is the divine stripped of its divinity that it may become human. But the perfect human, as human, is transformed into the divine, by the absorption, so to say, of the divine in the human, that in this divine incarnation the divine human may be enabled to give full play to its natural affections.

THE MISSION OF CONTRADICTION.

THE mission of Jesus was a mission of contradiction, of contradiction to Judaism.

This characteristic mark of his mission, which caused the speaker against to be spoken against ; this antagonism, which roused the hostility of the teachers of the Jews ; this sign, through which his doctrine could at any time be confidently recovered and clearly set forth, was shadowed in the symbolical language attributed to the aged Simeon when, according to the scriptures, the child Jesus was presented in the temple ; and can still be read between the lines of the corrupted form and rendering in which that language has been preserved.

It is true this significant utterance cannot have been made in the temple if, as the side-lights of the Gospels indicate, the child Jesus was not presented there. The occasion, therefore, must have been other than that to which it has been so ingeniously adapted and so judiciously attributed ; but even in this, its assumed shape, it was necessary that the

account of a scene in which the venerable Simeon and the aged Anna took such important parts should be preserved, because the memory of this interview and of what it indicated had been treasured as a priceless memorial. But this memorial was, like so many others, transformed and moulded into its present form that its actual symbolism might disappear in an imputed significance: for this was one of those symbols of double meaning, introduced into the Gospels, through which a compromise of contending doctrines was effected, that, as in the present instance, the one might ultimately pass into and be absorbed by the other.

In the early days of Christianity there was a contest between the judaizing and non-judaizing Christians, which gradually developed into a struggle between their messianizing and non-messianizing successors.

In the course of this struggle the Gospels assumed their present form, the teaching of Jesus its darkened character and doctrinal scope; and, as the outcome thereof, an aggressive doctrinal spirit acquired the ascendancy, which contradicted the teaching of Jesus even as his teaching had contradicted the teaching of Judaism, and cast out and trampled under foot all that was not conformed to itself.

This spirit so working made Christianity the

complement of Judaism ; the realization of that of which Judaism was thus held to have been the type.

But, so doing, it darkened the teaching of Jesus, and caused it to pass behind the veil of the Law, while seeming to rend that veil asunder.

Now if this be true, and the teaching of Jesus, which set aside the Law, has, in messianic Christianity, been darkened and lost sight of behind the veil of the Law, then all that is necessary to recover the same is to recur to the teaching of Judaism ; for under these conditions, and when studied from this point of view, it is invariably found that the life and doctrine of Jesus were in direct contradiction thereunto.

It was vital to the Jew to be imbued with the spirit—the spirit of the Law. Hence their rabbis taught that the “blessed” were those who were rich in spirit—rich in the spirit of the Law ; and that these, by interpreting the same, administered and ruled over the kingdom of God.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Those enriched with this spirit, the teachers and interpreters of the Jewish Law, were by these same rabbis called “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth.”

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, Jesus said to his disciples, who were poor and illiterate, unversed in the letter of the Law and unimbued with its spirit, "Ye are the light of the world ;" "Ye are the salt of the earth." Adding of the so-called "salt of the earth," the salt that had lost its savour, that it was good for nothing but to be cast out and trampled under foot.

The interpreters of the Jewish Law only imparted their light to those duly prepared to receive the same, and then only in such measure as these could take in.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, Jesus said, "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel [to measure out the light thereof to those needing the same], but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all." And this he did suggestively, as though asking the question, "Since men do so with the light they share, would God do otherwise with the light he imparts?"—which must have seemed conclusive to his hearers.

The administrators of the Jewish Law required the baptism of converts, the frequent ablution of votaries, and that certain acts—as the blessing and breaking of bread—should not be done without previously washing the hands.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, it

was said of Jesus that his baptism was a baptism in spirit or no baptism at all, and that he baptized not ; and that his disciples ate bread with unwashed hands, and were defended by him for so doing.

The administrators of the Jewish Law required the saying of formal prayers at stated intervals, preferably in congregation.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, it was matter of reproach that the disciples of Jesus did not so pray. And when, in consequence of this reproach, they asked him to teach them to pray, he showed them that the prayer which evoked the divine help was the cry of the heart to God in the hour of need. And his teaching in regard to prayer was, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father in secret."

The administrators of the Jewish Law forbade association with the legally unclean and with known offenders against the Law, as well as, of course, the breaking of bread with these, and prescribed fasting on occasion.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners, that is, of the legally unclean and of open and acknowledged breakers of the Law, and shared in the festivities of these. He was, moreover, called a

gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, and defended his disciples for not fasting.

The administrators of the Jewish Law claimed that the kingdom of God was theirs; that God spake by their voices and governed with their hands.

In contrast and contradiction to this and these, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you."

In the Jewish Law, the forgiveness of sin had no place. Retaliation was its leading principle; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, its prescriptions. And not to fulfil was to break the Law; so that under it forgiveness was impossible.

In contrast and contradiction to this, Jesus said "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Under the Jewish Law, the sinner—the offender against its ordinances or law-breaker, who was the only sinner known to the Jew—must expiate and so atone for his offences against the Law—the only sins known to the Jew—before he could be reconciled in conformity with the Law. Remission of sin was not possible in any other way; and it was because remission of sin was not possible in any other way, that expiatory sacrifices were ordained, in which the victim suffered the penalty incurred by him for whom it was substituted, that, the innocent suffering for the guilty, the Law might be

ostensibly fulfilled while its breaker went free. And the whole theory of vicarious sacrifice was devised in order by semblance to maintain the letter of the Law while in fact setting aside its spirit.

In contrast and contradiction to this, Jesus enforced the teaching of the prophet, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." For Jesus came in the line of the prophets, not in that of the sacrificers or priests. But the prophets were protesters against the Law ; and the prophet who said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," protested against Jehovah, the Giver of the Law, in the name of God, the Father of its victims. And the mercy gained by the death of Jesus, under the Law for defying the Law, was gained, by him to whom no mercy was shown, for those who disregard its ordinances.

The Jewish Law said, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah, thy God, in vain."

In contrast and contradiction to this, Jesus said, "Swear not at all ; . . . but let your word yea be yea, and your nay, nay.

The Jewish Law said, "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy."

In contrast and contradiction to this, Jesus disregarded the sabbath, and encouraged his disciples in so doing ; and the sabbath remains abolished to the Christian world.

The Jewish Law required the celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem by the eating of the body of the duly sacrificed "Passover" or Paschal lamb—the Paschal "Body," as it was commonly called.

In contrast and contradiction to this, when Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples at Jerusalem, before he suffered, he substituted bread for the body of the Paschal lamb, calling this his Paschal "Body."

On all these points the teaching of Jesus was a direct contradiction to the Law, his practice an open violation thereof.

But in substituting bread for the Paschal "Body" at the celebration of the Passover at Jerusalem, and calling this his Paschal "Body," Jesus illustrated another principle in his teaching; for the giving was a sign—a sign used in a particular sense.

Of what was this giving a sign? And what was the sense in which this sign was used?

The Passover passed away to his followers for ever, as did the sabbath; the Passover, which was the embodied sign of the Law, as was the sabbath its concrete expression. Hence this giving was the formal abolition of the Passover (as a representative act), as a sign and in the sense of a formal abolition (in its embodied symbol) of the Law; of that Law which, by his teaching, he had contradicted, point by point, and set aside.

Thus the giving was a sign that through Jesus the Law had passed away for ever to those who followed him. And hence the celebration of this giving, rightly understood, is, at one and the same time and by one and the same act, a celebration of the formal abolition of the Law, and of the memory of him who thus formally abolished it.

But in this giving a teaching principle is embodied ; for Jesus calls the sign by the name of that of which it is thus constituted the sign ; and as he does this of set purpose and with deliberation, while the doing is followed by the doing away with that for which the sign is thus substituted, he in this way shows, none the less clearly that the showing is by symbol and in figure, that to his followers that for which the sign is given has passed away and is to be no more.

This teaching principle is far-reaching.

He who was no Christ at all had suffered himself to be called the Christ—this to show that, through him to his, Christhood has passed away for ever.

But with the passing away of Christhood, all that Christhood embodied disappeared, and his followers were left in the hands of their divine Father, without need of mediation or mediator, of expiation or atonement.

With the Christhood the temple passed away ;

with the temple, formal worship—that thenceforth the body of man might be the temple of the living God, the life of man his only service.

Thus the teaching of Jesus was a contradiction to the teaching of Judaism because it was a contradiction to spiritual pretensions and spiritual authority ; because it was a contradiction to revelation ; a contradiction to the supernatural, to the superhuman ; in a word, a contradiction to revealed, that is, to formal religion.

Hence the life of Jesus set forth this teaching.

And hence those who seek to imitate that life and so to follow him, will, like him, reflect this teaching in their lives.

The life of Jesus, of him who calmly slept in the storm-tossed barque, was a life of simple trust in God ; a life providentially directed by circumstance and sustained by hope and love ; a life in which he was sensibly warned by a sensitive, an enlightening conscience when unintentionally and insensibly tending to deviate from his direct course ; a life in which he was led by an enlightened conscience on his onward path.

This, the natural, the God-given life of man on earth, was the life of Jesus.

Humbly born, brought up in a lawless and irreligious neighbourhood, whose shelter his parents

had sought that their own disregard of the Law, their own irreligion—as the Jews considered irreligion—might escape observation, his childhood and youth were passed in seclusion.

The training then and thus received from those to whom his bringing up had been confided by his divine Father, impressed him with the hollowness of Jewish pretensions and the ungodliness of its Law, and put him into antagonism with its teachers and their teaching.

But the habit of mind engendered by his surroundings led him to suppose that the hollowness of Judaism and the ungodliness of its Law were due to corrupting influences, and that earnest teachers and a purified teaching, illustrated by the life, would make the Jew a child of God while leaving him still a Jew.

Hence conversion in Judaism, with a re-interpretation, a re-integration of the Law, were the aim of his earliest aspirations.

Circumstances guiding him through the consequences of his baptism, of his fasting in the desert, and of his aspirations after a domestic church and worship (such as that of his home at Nazareth had been), warned him that the Son of God must not submit to the religious teachings of man ; must not practise asceticism nor seek pardon for offences

through expiation by way of atonement (whether personally or vicariously); and, above all, must not seek to impose a religious teaching on others. And such circumstances were his constant guides—guides leading him through the experiences of life.

Only occasional glimpses of his life are given in the Gospels, the merest fragments of his teaching; and these are so mixed up with other matter that the whole has been greatly obscured. But enough remains to show that the method and course of his teaching was the same to the end; that his conversion in Judaism gradually became a conversion from Judaism; and that this conversion from Judaism matured into a final rejection of all that came between the individual conscience and the divine guidance.

The mission of Jesus was indeed a mission of contradiction; a mission of contradiction in the first place to Judaism, and then, through Judaism, to that by which Judaism was built up, to revelation, to spirit mediation, to superhuman and supernatural intervention.

THE MISSION OF DEVOTION.

THE mission of Jesus was three-fold : it was a mission of affection, a mission of contradiction, and a mission of devotion.

As a mission of affection to all, it illustrated the important part the affections were to play in the life of man.

As a mission of contradiction to the Jews, it warned man to give no heed to revealed teaching, to priestly mediation and spirit intervention.

As a mission of devotion to his followers, it showed the completeness of the sacrifice they were required to make, to preserve their privileges as children of God.

The Gospels have messianized each of these three aspects of the mission of Jesus.

His call through the affections is, according to them, a call from the natural to the spiritual.

He who, according to tradition, abode with his father till that father's death ; whose first recorded social act was the taking part in a marriage-feast ;

who visited and was refreshed at the home of his married disciple, that disciple who afterwards, according to Paul, took his wife about with him ; who sought relief from the tension of his doctrinal struggles at Jerusalem in the congenial affections of Bethany ; whose last sympathetic thought was to provide a home for his mother in her desolation,—is held to have trampled all natural affection under foot, and to have called upon all to do as he did in this regard.

His warning through Judaism is, as they depict it, from a less strict to a more strict practice, from a lax to a severe discipline.

He who substituted the love of God and man, the love of God in man, for the commandments of the Decalogue, and thus abolished the one through the other ; he who was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, because he associated with and shared the festivities of lax observers or non-observers of the Law,—is held, as they interpret him, to have merged the spirit of the Law, stern as that spirit was, in its letter (of which, according to them, not one jot nor one tittle was to pass away), by commanding the renunciation of and resistance to natural inclination ; a renunciation and resistance which were to extend even to the dismemberment of the body, to avoid or avert the risk of transgression—

thus enforcing its maintenance with a yet more rigorous severity.

His sacrifice of devotion, as they set it forth, becomes a sacrifice of expiation in vicarious atonement.

He who died rather than give up, who died to confirm and enforce, the doctrine that man as the son of God, as one taught by a divine Father, must not permit intervention of any kind between himself and that Father, and therefore must not submit to priestly mediation; he who taught that God desired mercy and not sacrifice, is made by their transmutations to have offered himself in sacrifice, and died as a victim of expiation, to atone for the sins of mankind, that, bearing these upon the cross of Calvary, by his stripes man might be healed.

Such is the messianic view, as set forth in the Gospels, interpreted through the tradition to which they owe their received form.

To sustain this view and place it above and beyond impeachment, when the canon of Christian scriptures was settled, all writings were eliminated therefrom that were not in harmony with the messianic view, and, as far as seemed desirable or was possible, destroyed.

But truth is indestructible.

Hence in the Gospels, even in their present form, a reading, due to the followers of Jesus and showing

their sense of the meaning of his life and aim of his mission, still survives, which, although it has been obscured by the devices of the messianizing Christians almost to obliteration, none the less distinctly reveals, to him who can read between the lines of the gospel narratives and discern the history they veil, that, because the teaching of Jesus was a contradiction to the Law, it attracted immediate attention; that, as soon as his growing hostility to Judaism was recognized, one Judas, the reputed nephew of Caiaphas, was sent by the high-priest or official Christ, the scribes and Pharisees and elders of the people, to observe him; that this Judas was charged by his employers to listen to his doctrine and collect evidence against him—evidence of breaches of the Law committed by him or his followers, in order to betray him into their hands; and that to do this the more easily, he became a disciple and attached himself to the person of Jesus.

It can further be gathered from this reading that the first and only visit of Jesus to Jerusalem was on the occasion of his triumphal entry into the holy city. The triumphal character of that entry, indeed, confirms the reading here, while proving that it took place at the feast of Tabernacles.

The same reading further affirms that he then saw the temple, its worship and characteristic dese-

cration, for the first time, as would necessarily have been the case had this been his first visit to Jerusalem. And the way in which his disciples direct his attention to the several beauties of the temple confirms and indeed establishes the genuineness of the reading here.

But the same reading adds that what he then saw was the cause of his final rejection of Judaism, and formal passing over and setting aside of the Jewish Law at the Passover, which, till then, with desire he had desired to eat with his disciples.

With desire had he desired to eat this Passover with his disciples.

To eat the Passover was, at the appointed time, to eat the body of the duly consecrated and sacrificed Paschal lamb, of him whose "Passover" that lamb had been by consecration made, whose Paschal "Body" its body by sacrifice became.

Jesus had celebrated the feast of the Passover with his disciples more than once. The feast of the Mazza, of Azymes, of unleavened bread—the Jewish Mass—it had been at these celebrations. But he had never eaten the Passover with them, because the Passover could only be eaten at Jerusalem; and this was his first visit to the holy city.

He had eagerly desired to eat this Passover with his disciples.

Whence came this eagerness? Was it because he desired through this celebration to give a formal and final expression to his actual teaching? His acts must be his interpreters here. A false colour has been given to these, it is true; but they remain, as acts, to speak for themselves.

All Jews were bound to keep the Passover; to celebrate the feast at the appointed time. But the feast was celebrated in two ways.

At Jerusalem, the body of the Passover, commonly called the "Body" of the celebrant, who was the head of the family or celebrator of the feast, was eaten by himself and those who joined with him in celebrating the festival; eaten at the end of the supper at which it was appointed to be eaten, being then shared by him with them.

Out of Jerusalem, a Mazza, Azyme or unleavened bread, took the place of the Paschal Body, and was eaten instead of and as representing that Body, at the time when the actual "Body" of each celebrant was itself eaten by the celebrator with his party at each celebration in Jerusalem.

Such eating constituting the Pascho-mazzal celebration or Jewish Mass.

To eat the actual "Body" out of Jerusalem, where the feast was that of the Mazza or Mass, was an offence against the Law.

To eat the representative "Body" in Jerusalem, or celebrate the feast with a mazza and as a mass, was equally to break the Law.

Now when Jesus ate this Passover, which with desire he had desired to eat with his disciples ; when the time came for eating the Paschal Body, that is, at the close of the supper, or after they had supped, how did he act ?

He took a mazza and, blessing and breaking, gave it to his disciples in substitution for his actual Paschal Body, which he ought then to have distributed ; gave it with the significant words, Take, eat ; this is my "Body ;" and, so doing, celebrated the feast as a mass.

But he was in Jerusalem, where he ought to have given his actual Paschal Body, or celebrated the feast as of the Passover by eating the body of a "Passover," of his own "Passover," and therefore his own "Body," with his disciples ; where, so doing, he would have actually eaten the Passover with them ; and where he ought not to have celebrated the festival with the representative "Body" as a mass.

And yet he did give the representative Body to his disciples, did keep the feast as a Pascho-mazzal celebration or mass.

But in so doing he deliberately passed over and set aside the Law.

Now this act, this passing over, was done deliberately, of set purpose, and with design. Moreover, he gave it as a memorial of himself.

Hence through this act his life and doctrine, as he intended and desired them to be remembered, or rather the principles which had actuated that life and instigated that doctrine, were to be commemorated.

But by this act he deliberately broke the Law, and, so doing, formally proclaimed, and by every commemoration of that act its commemorators as formally, though unconsciously, solemnly proclaim, that the object of his mission and the teaching of his life were the passing over and setting aside of the revealed Law of Jehovah.

That such was the meaning of this act, its actual as well as its intended meaning, is shown by the way in which it was understood.

While the way in which it was understood is declared by the immediate action of Judas.

He was the paid spy of the high-priest, charged to watch for and report breaches of the Law.

This act of Jesus was a flagrant breach of the Law.

Hence no sooner was it committed than Judas, at once and without a moment's delay, rose from the table and departed to inform his employers.

These were thereupon greatly elated, for their deadly enemy was at length in their power. He had deliberately committed an offence which would be recognized by all as one of the gravest character and wholly without excuse. He had gratuitously performed an act which would kindle public feeling against him ; for it was a direct and unmistakable affront to Jehovah, whose commandment was thus set at nought.

Their anxiety was to carry the multitude with them.

In this they were greatly favoured by circumstances ; for on that self-same night, so says tradition, the temple was broken into, and the book of the Law and the sacred vessels and vestments stolen.

It is true the thieves were taken and subsequently crucified with Jesus, amongst whom he was numbered as guilty of the same crime ; but this has been withheld from the Gospels as pointing too directly to the incidence of his teaching.

This was exactly such an opportunity as his accusers could make use of, and they unhesitatingly charged him as the principal malefactor, showing that his doctrine and practice, as illustrated by its latest expression and example, naturally led up to a crime which was its inevitable outcome and fruition.

This crafty charge stirred up the people, that people which had acclaimed his entry into Jerusalem; and in their fear lest the consequences of such a sacrilege should be visited by their God, Jehovah, upon themselves, aided perhaps by the further apprehension of the loss their vested interests would sustain should the Law be really set aside, they vehemently sought his death, that he might thus expiate for the sin he was charged with, little recking whether he were guilty or not, because by their teaching they had learnt that when the innocent died for the guilty the expiation was the more complete.

Failing to establish this accusation before the Roman governor, his accusers charged him with seeking to make himself a king; and when foiled in this, proceeded to their final charge, that he said he was the Son of God.

This was a specious charge which they foresaw must be fatal to Jesus; for he could not deny it, since to do this would have been to deny his distinctive and central, his one doctrine—that man was the son of God, and as the son of God must look solely for guidance to his divine Father.

And yet not to deny it was to give the Roman governor to understand that he was a pretender to the imperial purple; for the title "Son of God"

was attributed to the Roman Emperor, and all pretenders thereunto were liable to death, and could not be set at large.

While, again, not to deny it was to lead the Jewish multitude to believe that he claimed to be a divine personage—the natural Son of God supernaturally conceived as a divine incarnation ; a belief which was thence handed down and is still maintained, but which was blasphemy.

Upon this charge he was condemned ; for this he suffered and died, crucified with the two thieves who had done in fact what he had done in spirit, broken into, profaned and robbed the temple.

Thus Jesus died for rejecting the authority of that which was believed to be a divinely-appointed priesthood, and repudiating the prescriptions of that which was believed to be a divinely-revealed Law ; and to vindicate his claim for the spiritual freedom of man, who as the son of God was only to be taught of and led by his divine Father ; died rather than seem to weaken this claim by in any way qualifying his title as Son of God.

And thus the true follower of Jesus is the one who follows him as closely as possible in these regards.

The doctrine of Jesus was, restitution of the natural and destitution of the spiritual.

He taught the resurrection of the body, not as of the body left to perish with the earth, but because the natural form and organization of the children of God will be renewed and continued in that state to which they pass at death.

He healed, made whole or saved the diseased body of man, by restoring the natural health, that the functions of life might be duly discharged by the renewed body.

He healed, revived and saved the soul of man by casting out the spirits which sought to possess him, and giving back the freedom that is of God.

And this was the work of his life; and in this way his life illustrated his doctrine, while his doctrine displayed the meaning of his life.

To this work he devoted his life; to maintain this doctrine intact he sacrificed that life; and in so devoting, in so sacrificing that life, he set forth, through this its sublime culmination, that his mission was, in whole as in part, truly a mission of devotion.

THE MISSION OF SUBSTITUTION.

THE teaching of Jesus was essentially practical in character ; suited to all understandings ; adapted to all capacities.

His great aim was simplicity.

This simplicity he gained by associating action with his words, that the one might interpret the other ; and where action was wanting, depicted action, vividly portrayed in parables, took its place.

This gave to his method a lifelike character. And it was lifelike because he appealed to the life, that through the life he might influence the life ; and, so influencing the life, might make it evident, if not to all, at least to those submitting to his influence, that his call was through the natural to the natural.

To fix the attention, and thus give weight and impressiveness to his words, his direct attacks on what he utterly condemned were made by substitution. Indeed, his favourite way of teaching was to give one thing for another ; to call something that which it was not, and even could not be, or certainly

would never be recognized for, that in so giving the same, that for which it was given might pass away in and through that which was given for it, to those receiving this symbolical teaching. And the attention of his hearers was predisposed to this method of teaching because the basis of the Jewish system was the formal giving of one thing for another—the sacrificing of the innocent for the guilty, that the latter might go free.

This system of teaching by substitution was in reality but a developed application of his system of teaching by contradiction.

The growth of this system can be traced in the Sermon on the Mount.

In this Sermon, each of the beatitudes is the direct contradiction of a teaching enforced by the interpreters and administrators of the Law, by the substitution of what was excluded by that teaching for that which was included in the same, or blessing that which it held to be, either directly or by implication, accursed.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, the poor in the spirit of the Law, was the first of these beatitudes, in which he substitutes “the poor in spirit,” those whom the Law held to be accursed, for “the rich in spirit,” those to whom it accorded its highest benedictions. And so on of the rest.

After pronouncing the beatitudes, Jesus likens those who are reviled and persecuted for his sake to the prophets, or earlier protesters against and contradictors of the official interpreters of the Law. And then led, by the reference to the prophets, to consider those against whom these had protested, the self-styled "salt of the earth" and "light of the world," he at once expands his system and gives it that directness which to non-Jews it might seem to want, by exclaiming to those he was addressing, "Ye are the salt of the earth!"

Why did he thus style his disciples and followers?

Not that they might occupy the official position of the so-called salt of the earth. This the facts of his life and their lives show; for this they never did. But that by their not occupying the office or position thus seemingly attributed to them, it might be self-evident that he so gave them to signify to his followers throughout all time that official "salt" was to pass from the earth and be no more, as far as they were concerned.

This symbolical teaching he emphasized by adding, "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot"—in which his sentiments on dogmatic teaching and dogmatizing teachers are clearly and vividly ex-

pressed. And that this was his meaning here is proved, were such proof necessary, by his positive command, given later, that his disciples were not to suffer themselves to be called rabbi, master or teacher; were to call none on earth their father, papa or pope.

In like manner and to like intent he transferred to them the designation, "the light of the world."

Upon another occasion he is held to have applied this designation to himself. But, if so, he then defined the sense in which he used it, in the words, "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

He condemned dogmatizing teachers because the light they gave forth was not the light of life, because it obscured the light of life and was therefore darkness.

He condemned dogmatic teaching, that is, teaching by verbal definition and authoritative exposition, whether imparted orally or in writing, because, owing to the instability of the devices of man, of human methods and human interpretations, and the transient character of all things human, verbal statements are liable to change, and with this to lose, their meaning; and then, when the dogmatic salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

This was why his teaching consisted in appeals

to the life ; why his doctrine was set forth in his own life, and in the lives of those who followed him by imitating his life, or living with him and as he did ; why action, depicted action and example, were his great expositors ; and why he left no written, no definitely expressed doctrine.

He knew that the written and the spoken word were liable to be misunderstood, misrepresented and misinterpreted ; while a simple, natural life, such as he led, such as he invited all to lead, such as, to follow him, it was necessary to lead, spoke for itself.

Hence he called all from the written word and its dogmatizing interpreters to the life of the gospel he preached—the gospel of life, the gospel of nature, the gospel of flesh. And here, again, he taught by his favourite method, substitution ; for he allowed himself to be called “the Word,” to be so called as an endearing title, that his followers might realize that in and through him the word, the written word, so called, of God had passed away, and was to be no more to them for ever.

This teaching was “news,” good news, to them, unlearned and illiterate as they were, and they therefore called it “gospel.” But they called it gospel in the same playful way that they had called him Jesus, “Saviour,” and then “the Word”—because the Hebrew word for gospel, *Basar*, “to announce

glad tidings," also as a word-sign signified "flesh," and thus served to remind them that the gospel of Jesus bore to them the glad tidings that it was a gospel of flesh, announced to them the good news that it was a recall from the spiritual and supernatural to the natural.

The gospel of Jesus was a gospel of flesh and of blood; his doctrine a recall to the human, the natural.

This doctrine was to be lived, not learnt; to be absorbed into the life, even as food is absorbed into the body, being as necessary to the life of the soul. This was why he likened his doctrine to, nay called it, "flesh" and "blood," as in the words, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." This was why he said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood," except ye live the life that he lives, "ye have not life in yourselves;" why he exclaimed, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him."

His doctrine was his life; his life his doctrine.

Doctrine was called food in the symbolical language of those days—meat and drink.

Doctrine was "bread," the staff of life, and "wine," the exhilarator of the soul.

Doctrine was the gateway through which man passed behind the veil of the sanctuary and entered the precincts of the therein dwelling spirit.

Jesus was doing away with doctrine—with the so-called knowledge of good and evil into which man had been betrayed ; doing away with it by recalling him to the great truth that he was sent into the world to live and not to learn ; by showing him that his life was the process by which powers and faculties were prepared and fitted for use in a future state ; and by indicating that it was intended for a higher purpose than the mere accumulation of a knowledge which could not but be wholly useless under conditions with which it would have no relations.

Hence he gave his own life to be the example to his followers, knowing that if they believed him they would live like him.

And because his life was his doctrine, the following of that life the only doctrine he had to impart ; and because the imitation of that life was to take the place of a doctrine which professed to be the meat and drink of those who received it, which claimed to be the entrance through which these passed from the natural to the supernatural—he, in recalling them from the supernatural to the natural through his doctrine of life, substituted his own life, which was his doctrine personified in himself, for the doctrine he was doing away with.

This was why he called himself “the Bread of

Life," "the True Vine" or source of all wine, "the Door," and so on.

And in each of these designations he called himself that which he was not (in the eyes of those he was addressing, who well understood the symbolism of his language, for there was no question of actuality in these representations), to show that the doctrine after whose symbols he thus called himself, the doctrine which in this wise he rejected and condemned, was, in and through him, to pass away and be no more to those who, believing his word, followed him by living as he did.

His mission of contradiction to doctrine was carried on by contradicting the doctrine of Judaism. His mission of substituting the natural for the supernatural, by substituting natural for supernatural aims as the stimulants of life; for he knew that the character of the life was determined by the character of the aims which actuated it, just as the character of the life to come is the outcome of the character of the life that is; and that only those could and would be natural who sought their being out of and through nature.

To produce natural fruit, the natural tree must grow in a natural way.

The root of practical Judaism was the supernatural.

Hence for a Jew to call to the natural from the supernatural was to call from Judaism.

In doing this, Jesus substituted the natural for the supernatural, or taught by substitution ; applying this substitution through himself, through his own simple, natural life.

The stem of practical Judaism was the Christhood.

Hence for a Jew to call from practical Judaism, from the supernatural to the natural, was to call from the Christhood to that which was not Christ.

Jesus had substituted the natural, in himself, for the root, and so doing had done away with that root, as far as his followers were concerned.

To do away with the stem, he suffered himself to be called the Christ ; even as he had suffered himself to be called the Word to show that the so-called word of God was to pass away in and through him to his.

But in suffering himself to be called the Christ, and thus substituting himself for the official Christ of Judaism, he, who was no Christ at all, gave himself for that which he was not, and, in so giving, gave himself to show that, in and through him, that for which he had given himself was to pass away and be no more to his followers for ever.

The branches of practical Judaism were the

teachers of the people, the elders and leaders of the synagogues.

Hence for a Jew to call from practical Judaism, from the supernatural to the natural, was to call not only from the root and from the stem, but also from the branches.

Jesus had substituted the natural, in himself, for the root and for the stem, that in his followers it might supersede the training of practical Judaism.

For the branches he substituted his disciples, in and through Peter, the first-born.

Those who through want of doctrinal teaching could not be teachers, he thus gave as the teachers of the people ; and in so giving, gave them to show that, in and through them by him, doctrinal teaching was done away with.

In this substitution, his first thought appears to have been to substitute the family for the synagogue, the family under the headship of the first-born, or a natural for a supernatural religion. But he never carried out this intention, if that can be called an intention which may have been only the suggestion of a sudden impulse ; did not found a domestic church, or church of any kind. And by his life he did not countenance any form of congregational worship. Rather, he distinctly discountenanced such practice by his own practice, which was to

withdraw from all, even from his favourite disciples, when he wished to commune with his Father.

The teachers of the people claimed the power of binding and of loosing. They decided what could and what could not be lawfully done. They declared whether what had been done was permissible under the Law, and so loosed the doer from the penalty of an apprehended infraction; or was not permissible, but contrary to its precepts, and so bound the transgressor to the thereupon accruing penalty—a penalty from which he could only be released or redeemed by an equivalent legal expiation and atonement. And this penalty could not be mitigated, but must be rigorously enforced. And this was why it could be said of these teachers that they bound heavy burdens on men's shoulders which they would not or could not lift a finger to lighten: for the claims of the Law must be satisfied before the law-breaker could be set free.

To do away with this power of binding and loosing, and restore to his followers their full liberty of action, Jesus taught (Matt. xviii. 20), "Where two or three are agreeing together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and in so teaching substituted for it to them the full power of agreement amongst themselves, and direct appeal to the Father without any mediatorial intervention. And he included him-

self as a joint actor here, to show that in, with and through him all mediation was to cease to his followers for ever.

The teachers of the people made obedience through fear the actuating motive of submission to the Law.

Jesus substituted love for fear as the actuating motive of his followers, in substituting the two precepts of love for the ten commandments of the Decalogue.

The teachers of the people were the enforcers of the Law.

To break the Law was to become subject to death; and it was their duty to see the death-penalty executed.

This penalty could be discharged vicariously, by commutation into sacrifice; so that, upon the sacrifice being made, the Law was satisfied, the transgression expiated and atoned for, and the transgressor duly absolved.

The typical Jewish sacrifice was that of the Passover, which all Jews were bound to make every year. In Jerusalem, by sacrificing a lamb and eating its body as the Paschal body of the sacrificer; and all Jews were enjoined to go annually to the holy city for the purpose. Out of Jerusalem, by substituting a mazza, an unleavened bread, for, and

after formally breaking the same, eating it in place of and as the Paschal body of the sacrificer—which was the way of celebrating the feast appointed for those who were unable to make the annual pilgrimage. This celebration was the Jewish antetype of the Christian mass.

Jesus taught, with the prophet, that God willeth neither sacrifice nor burnt-offering ; and, to enforce this teaching and do away with sacrifice to his followers, he, on eating his last Paschal supper with his disciples at Jerusalem, substituted a mazza for the body of the lamb he should have sacrificed and eaten, saying, on breaking and distributing it, This is my body, my Paschal body ; and charged them so to do, so to act, in memory of himself.

In doing this, he passed over and abolished sacrifice to his followers for ever. And the Passover has ceased to them ever since.

In doing this, he passed over, set aside and abolished the Law to his followers for ever ; for the one act involved the other.

But in so doing, he broke the Law by doing that which, though lawful and even enjoined elsewhere, was not lawful in Jerusalem. And for this he was betrayed into the hands of, and persecuted to the death by, the teachers of the Jews.

His last act was that act of generous substitution,

in which he substituted himself for his disciples on his arrest. These had shared his guilt with him, and ought therefore to have shared its penalty ; but on learning from the servitors of the high-priest that it was him they sought, he surrendered himself into their hands, saying, " If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way" (John xviii. 8).

A final act of substitution has been imputed to him by the messianizing interpreters of his life and doctrine : that, dying on the cross of Calvary, he offered himself as a vicarious sacrifice for, and to incur the death-penalty impending over, all sinners or breakers of the Law, that, he dying for them, they might go free.

But this death-penalty was not imposed by his divine Father. It was imposed by Jehovah, the God of the Jews, under a Law revealed by him and administered in his name.

The death-penalty under this Law was absolute ; from it there was no escape. He who offended in a single point was guilty of a breach of the whole.

But in administering it as interpreted, the discovery was soon made that no one could keep the entire Law. Even Moses, " the bridegroom of blood," through whom it was delivered, so offended that the death-penalty was exacted from him by its Giver ; for he was not permitted to enter the promised land,

but died, after a distant view thereof, according to the word of Jehovah.

Hence a way of escape had to be sought.

This way was found in the adoption of the practice of vicarious sacrifice, under which, the innocent suffering for the guilty, the sinner went free. And thus, while the letter of the Law was in semblance kept, its spirit was evaded.

This Law, the revealed Law of Jehovah, Jesus had already passed over and set aside for his followers; and in so setting it aside, had freed them from liability to the death-penalty incurred under it by those who submitted to its rule.

He had, moreover, abolished all sacrifice in their behalf.

Hence he could not have died to atone for their breaches of a Law which in his lifetime he had himself disregarded; which, by countenance and example, he had approved of their disregarding; and which has been set aside by the Christian world ever since in the disregard of its fundamental principle, the injunction to keep holy the sabbath-day.

And he could not have offered himself in sacrifice, whether for others or otherwise, seeing that he had disapproved of, and taught that God willed not, sacrifice.

But it was necessary to the messianizing Christians that he should so have offered himself, should so have died.

Hence in their evangel they taught not only that he died to expiate and atone for the sins of the world, but that he died as the lamb of Jehovah, the Paschal lamb, on the day and at the hour when the legal Passover should be killed.

And yet in so doing they overlooked the important fact that three Evangelists testify, that Jesus celebrated the Passover the day before he suffered, and so could not have died as the Paschal lamb; and disregarded the significant indication that the Paschal sacrifice, as instituted, was in no sense an expiatory sacrifice, but was deprecatory and even dissembling in its character as a sign to the destroying angel, and was simply a shield to preserve the first-born of Israel from the death decreed against the first-born of Egypt, because the Egyptians would not yield obedience to the demands of Jehovah; and that, as perpetuated, it was to be a memorial to the children of Israel of the deliverance from bondage wrought for them by their God.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEW
OF THE
MEDIATE RELATIONS OF SPIRIT.

NATURAL OR SUPERNATURAL?

WHEN man, innocent as yet in the eyes of his invisible Father, does that which tends to counteract the designs of that Father in himself, a feeling of distress comes over him. If, disregarding this feeling, he pursues the course on which he has entered, a sense of weight oppresses him, which, still disregarded, either so painfully affects him as to render powerless his action in the course he had persisted in, or for the time and perhaps wholly abandons him.

This, which is called conscience, is the voice of God speaking through nature, the action being wholly natural.

When man, the outcome of a corrupted, the victim of a fallen nature in the eyes of spirit, does that which tends to attract the action of spirit influences, his aspirations, suggested or inspired by these influences, are to be lifted out of the natural into the spiritual. He desires to be superhumanly actuated ; to be guided by inspiration, by revelation, by mira-

cle ; to be favoured with apparitions of his spirit guides ; to be visited by and admitted to the closest union with divinized spirit ; and, urged by these longings, is impelled to seek superhuman aid in his endeavours to lead a supernatural life.

This, which is due to the workings of spirit, is an action hostile to nature, an action whose design is to spiritualize the human.

These are the two ways by which man can be, by either of which he is, taught ; the one wholly natural, the other as completely supernatural.

They are absolutely opposed in their working as in their work, the one to the other.

Man is at once a created being and a being in process of creation.

Viewed simply with regard to his present life, he is merely a created being ; a being who comes into the world by process of generation, lives for a brief space, and then passes away, death closing his seemingly meaningless career.

Regarded through his aspirations, hopes and expectations, he is a being in process of creation ; a being whose temporary life is a preparation for a future existence ; a being who is fitted for a future existence by a natural process of regeneration, a process gone through insensibly during his present and actual life ; a being in whom this insensible

regeneration is a creative process, to which he is submitted in, through and by that life.

The actual life of man commenced through natural process, the process of generation.

In that process a previously created spirit clothes itself with materials provided by its human parents, or makes for itself a body in human form, that form in which its human life is to be passed.

The spirit thus clothing itself had been previously created by natural process.

Commencing as a spirit germ produced by the interaction of elemental spirit and elemental matter in the more rudimentary processes of creation, it had passed in succession through an advancing series of organic and animal forms, themselves slowly built up by its own progressive advance, until sufficiently prepared to enter on its human career.

The human or highest and last animal form through which it was to pass in its upward and onward progress, had been similarly created by natural process ; for the advancing spirits advanced and improved the organic and animal forms by their uses of life as they successively passed through them, in this way preparing their offspring for the advancing life uses of spirits less advanced than themselves ; and still further adapted each to the particular uses of the life on which they were about

to enter, while clothing themselves successively in advanced bodies by the process of generation.

To the spirit advancing under this natural process (and simultaneously, by a process of selective evolution, advancing the typical or ascending series of animal forms, by using and while using which itself gained a further advance), life has been a use : a use in which desire has been the incentive to action.

But to the advancing embodied spirit or living being, this desire has only been controlled, this use checked, by inability to gratify the one through the other.

Hence the distinguishing mark of spirit in its uses of life is uncontrolled and uncontrollable desire.

To the advanced spirit in human form, life continues to be a use. And since in the human form this spirit is still passing through a creative process, this use continues to be a creative use, as it has been from the first. But in man this use has been submitted to a change ; for though desire is still his incentive to action, this desire, hitherto uncontrollable, has been in him submitted to control.

The uncontrollable appetite of advancing spirit was necessary to the unfolding of the creative design ; for under it the most capable embodied spirits, in their several classes and orders, selfishly possessed themselves of all that they desired during

their uses of life, and thus, by a process of natural selection, while improving their own condition, transmitted improved forms for further creative action.

But this process of creation caused suffering to weaker forms, which were preyed upon by, or sacrificed to, the appetites of their stronger competitors.

Thus good and evil, as these consequences of functional activity are collectively called by those who only see the momentary and transient working and are ignorant of the compensations which ensue, are the necessary outcome of creative action, and are themselves essential factors in the work.

But these consequences of functional activity are only known as good and evil to man. And they are so known to him through his own experience, that he may learn in what the dignity of humanity and the superiority of the human consists, and see the importance of keeping his desires and appetites under control, that he may not fall away from the standard set before him.

Outside and around him, they are simply a part of the means by which the creative process is carried on and its design attained.

They grow out of self-seeking ; and since, while they are the appointed means in their proper sphere for gaining an important end, the creation of man,

they are the outcome of self-seeking, it is manifest that a self-seeking impulse produced the creation of man.

But a self-seeking impulse could only produce a self-seeker.

Now something higher than a mere self-seeker was intended to be the outcome of creation, because the self-seeker is incapable of love.

And yet by love alone can the evil be cast out, and the good developed and matured.

Hence the highest bodily form having been attained in man—having been attained by self for the good of self, at the cost of that which was not self; and the attaining spirits, by which his developed form had been produced, having simultaneously developed self-seeking appetites in themselves—the matured spirit embodied in human form is a self-seeking spirit, prone to use its human life as selfishly as the embodied existences it had previously passed through.

But on entering the human form, spirit is submitted to new conditions and relations.

It enters that form that the creative process, through which it is passing and in which it takes its duly allotted part, may make a further advance.

From being a simple spirit, with unstable relations to the bodies with which it had been previously

associated or clothed, it is now to be converted into a living soul, a being with comparatively stable bodily relations—the being in process of creation through it from the commencement, which at death passes, as a spiritu-material being, the divine human, from the perishable body of man, or matrix in which it has been formed.

The process by which this change is effected is simply a continuation of the process by which each of the previous stages of the work has been reached, and is therefore the natural use of the life that is being passed through.

It is a regenerative process, and the delusive spiritual attribution of the conditions under which it has been held to accrue, in ecclesiastical phraseology, does not prevent the actual regeneration of man from being a strictly natural process, a continuation of that process by which creation is accomplished.

But in its human life this matured spirit is submitted to new conditions and relations.

For the first time it wakes up to the knowledge of good and evil; and through this knowledge learns that its desires and appetites need restraint, that in itself it may cast out the evil, and develop and mature the good.

This knowledge is not instinctive. It is acquired ;

learnt by experience during the progressive use of life.

Hence for this no teacher was required; no special way of teaching.

The evil to be cast out sprang from self-love; from a love which was centred in self.

The good to be matured had its roots in love; in a love whose distinguishing mark was the forgetfulness of self.

This casting out, on the one hand, and developing and maturing, on the other, was to be done by the self during and through the uses it made of its passing life—*that during and by the doing it might establish in itself the conditions and relations necessary to the regenerative process continuously going on.*

Hence sensitiveness in the self—a sensitiveness to the tendencies of its actions, a perception of their self-seeking or self-forgetting character—with an incentive to the love which is outside self, to supply the required stimulus, would be adequate channels for the needed guidance.

But this sensitiveness would be a natural expression of the condition of the being under regeneration, while the incentive would be the outcome thereof—*this sensitiveness and incentive constituting or being the organs of the natural conscience.*

A being with the knowledge of good and evil, sensitive to the difference between right and wrong, and warned by this sensitiveness to do the one and to avoid the other, would require no further teaching that the creative work might continue in it as naturally and as uninterruptedly as in any of its previous stages of existence.

That this should be so is self-evident, when the conditions of the successive stages of creation are considered.

The creative work, as the outcome of a function in the life of God, is a continuous work.

The beings under creation through it advance progressively, step by step, from the germ state to the human form, through a succession of inorganic, organic and animal lives.

The Creator of this work has carried it on throughout by natural process, as the outcome of a function in his own life, nature being at once his instrument and his means.

In man, this Creator has at length produced an animal form suitable for the beings he is creating.

This form he has produced by natural process.

In this form he has brought the beings he is creating to the knowledge of good and evil, that they may do the one and avoid the other.

And they are to do the one and to avoid the

other, to enable him to carry on and complete his work in them.

Hence the beings under creation by this process are simply the subjects of the creative work, and only co-workers in so far as they conform their lives to the conditions under which alone that work can be carried on.

In its human form, the life of the being under creation is an animal life; a life which can only be carried on and perpetuated by the natural processes to which man owes his existence.

The only superadded condition here is the knowledge of good and evil.

The only additional requirement from him, that he should do the one and avoid the other.

Thus man was to be a good animal and lead a good animal life; a life in which self-seeking was to cease to be his actuating motive.

Placed by this Creator, his invisible Father, on earth by natural process to lead this good animal life, he is still in the hands of that Father, who is further advancing the work of creation in him conformably to the natural uses he makes of his natural life.

This invisible Father loves the child he is thus generating, and watches over its every action, warning it, by the feeling of distress they occasion, when those actions tend to counteract the progressing

work, that it may avoid the evil and continue to do the good, and so the work be uninterrupted.

This work is the conversion of the spirit of man into the human soul, that he may pass at death to the state prepared for him ; a state for the enjoyment of which he fits himself by the uses he makes of his passing life.

But though man is thus warned by his invisible Father to avoid the evil and invited to do the good, he is left with perfect freedom to do the evil if he so choose ; his invisible Father having withheld himself from human cognizance, that man's liberty of action may be complete.

The essential condition of the progress of the work is that man, while learning to distinguish between good and evil through his experiences of life, should, in his uses of life, avoid the evil and do the good spontaneously.

And that this might be so, and no external pressure be brought to bear upon him, God remains incognizable.

And God remains incognizable that man may be taught by natural means, through his conscience enlightened by experience ; and thus the whole work of creation be natural throughout.

To teach man by revelation is to substitute a supernatural for the natural way of teaching.

To appear to man and speak to him as God, to appeal to him as an angel, messenger or spirit, sent of God, is to subvert the aim and intent of the creation by a pretended lifting of the veil behind which the Creator has seen fit to shroud himself.

To tell man that he was created in a higher estate; that he has fallen from that estate to the animal condition in which he finds himself; that this animal condition is a degraded one; and that he must therefore seek to lift himself out of it by de-animalizing and spiritualizing his life, is to falsify his view of the natural order in which he has been placed by his Creator, and tempt him to forsake the innate simplicity of his being.

But this is the supernatural way of teaching.

The supernatural and the natural ways of teaching are opposed, either to the other.

Of these two ways, therefore, one, and one only, can be that of the Creator of man.

But the Creator of man is the Author of nature.

The creation carried on by him is essentially a natural creation.

He has created man by natural process, through this natural creation.

The natural way of teaching is an outcome of the nature of man, and is therefore a product of the natural process by which he has been created.

And since man is still under creation, or being submitted to creative processes in the natural order in which he finds himself, who can doubt that the natural way of teaching, by suggestion and warning through the experiences of life—by suggestions and warnings spontaneously arising through the enlightening and enlightened conscience—by suggestions and warnings prompting him to the course he ought to follow as each necessity for action arises—is the way through which their invisible Father guides the lives of his faithful children?

And yet it has been imputed to Jesus that he used the supernatural way of teaching.

But it has also been imputed to him that he was supernaturally conceived and born into the world as a supernatural being; that his life on earth was a supernatural life; that he died to fulfil a supernatural requirement and carry out a supernatural design; that he was supernaturally raised from the dead on the third day from his crucifixion; that he supernaturally passed forty days in a supernatural state, during which he supernaturally taught a supernatural faith to his disciples, that he might convert natural followers into supernatural apostles; and that he then terminated his supernatural apparitions by supernaturally ascending into the heavens.

In a word, it has been imputed to him that he

was a superhuman, a supernatural being ; that he was the Messiah ; the Messiah according to the scriptures ; when of course he must have done and suffered all these things, for such were the attributes and requirements of the Messiahship.

But had he been the Messiah, the Messiah according to the scriptures, he would not and could not have been the Son of Him who made and is regenerating man by natural process.

The supernatural and the natural ways of teaching have, undoubtedly, both been associated with the life of Jesus ; and this so dexterously as to make the one seem to cast out and take the place of the other. But a very little consideration will serve to show the true relations of either to that life and to him.

When Jesus received the baptism of John, a spirit descended on and, dove-like, hovered over him, and a voice from Heaven proclaimed him as the beloved Son of the Speaker.

This was, as it was intended to be, a distinct supernatural approbation of the baptism he had just received.

By this baptism, thus supernaturally approved, Jesus had sought to make himself the disciple of John.

But he thereupon separated himself from the

Baptist and saw him no more ; and afterwards intimated that, great as was this ascetic, the least of his own non-ascetic disciples was greater than he.

Why did Jesus, after such a supernaturally approved baptism, thus separate himself, suddenly separate himself, from one whose discipleship he had spontaneously sought ?

There could have been but one reason for so doing ; since to say that he retired into the desert to prepare himself by asceticism for a mission in which he not only discarded asceticism but sanctioned the non-ascetic practices of his disciples, however plausible it may have seemed to the mesianizing Christians, is simply a *reductio ad absurdum*. He immediately quitted the Baptist because his conscience, rightly interpreting the supernatural approbation of his baptism, warned him that he was the Son of God, and therefore must not suffer an adopted sonship, whether of spirit or of man.

After Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, the spirit again tempted him, through appetite, presumption and ambition ; and, once more assuming to be God, invited his worship.

But warned by his enlightened conscience, Jesus again foiled the tempter, while gathering from the temptation the lesson that fasting exposed man to the assaults of spirit and gave the tempter his

opportunity. And on this occasion the true character of the temptation was recognized by the mesianizing Christians, though they rejected the lesson inculcated by it.

After this temptation, Jesus was ministered unto, as is said, by angels.

But it is also said of Elijah that he was fed by ravens. It is possible, therefore, that just as the Arabs of the Hebrew text, that ministered to the wants of the prophet in his retirement, have been turned into ravens, the "messengers," probably sent by the mother of Jesus, that had been seeking and at length found him at a critical moment and ministered to his wants, have been transformed into the "angels" of the gospel narrative.

A third attempt of spirit to recall Jesus from his natural to the supernatural life and teaching, has been suggestively handed down in the history of the transfiguration.

Here, as it would appear, spirits, in the forms of Moses and Elijah, sought to bring him back to the Law and the Prophets. It is needless to say that this attempt was without success, and that the representatives of the Law and the Prophets, foiled in their design, presently disappeared in a cloud, leaving Jesus alone to his disciples.

And yet, even so, the history of the transfigura-

tion has been a powerful instrument in the hands of the messianizing Christians; for accepted by them as a witness that Jesus was a superhuman being, while testifying to the non-messianizing Christians that the representatives of the Law and the Prophets disappeared that the human Jesus and his human teaching might remain in their true proportions, its natural aspect was gradually merged into and lost sight of in its supernatural pretensions.

A final conflict between the spirit and Jesus is not dimly shadowed in the account of the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

His triumph in this struggle declared itself through the events which immediately followed, when that baffled spirit, the prince of this world, through its minions, hurried to its close a life which it had absolutely failed to influence and use.

On each of these occasions Jesus resisted the supernatural and clung to the natural way.

But besides these direct assaults of the spirit, indirect devices were being constantly used against him by his ever-watchful antagonist.

A typical example of these occurred at the marriage-feast, when water was changed into wine.

On this occasion, when the supply of the favourite but treacherous beverage was exhausted, Jesus, seeing that the guests had already had sufficient, desired

to give them a lesson in temperance ; and this was why he directed that water should be served to those whose thirst was not yet quenched. But the spirit, seeing its opportunity, thereupon changed the water into wine, that through this evident miracle supernatural power might be attributed to Jesus, at any rate by others, if not by himself.

The so-called miracles of healing do not fall under this category.

The preservation of the body in health, as well as its restoration thereto from a diseased or suffering condition, depends on the action of the embodied spirit, that is, the spirit of the man himself, whose vesture that body is.

This spirit, which in the process of generation formed the body with which it clothed itself for the uses of the life it was to pass therein, by its own strength and vigour maintains the strength and vigour of its bodily organ. Hence diseases of the body, whether as consequence or cause, indicate an enfeebled condition of spirit. And in the cure of disease, stimulation of the spirit is necessary that the curative action may be initiated. Indeed, this stimulation of the spirit is the first necessity of the case ; and the successful physician applies this stimulus through the confidence with which he inspires his patient. And without this confidence, progress

towards recovery in serious illness will be, if possible, very slow.

A power of impressing the spirit of his patient is essential to the healer. Some have this power more than others. Jesus had it in a very marked degree. Hence he was able, in some cases, to recall spirits to the bodies from which they had seemingly departed, or restore to active life those believed to be dead. And the possibility of the recall of the spirit to the body in such cases shows that the death from which they were recalled was only conditional and not absolute.

But the exercise of this power was simply the exercise of a natural faculty, though in Jesus it served to attract the attention of others, and led to an influence which impelled his followers to imitate his life, and, by so doing, to forsake the supernatural for the natural.

Thus the miracles associated with the life of Jesus were of two classes—apparent and actual.

Of these, the apparent miracles were wrought by Jesus himself when he healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb. But he wrought these wonders, as they appeared to those ignorant of the workings of nature, by natural means, in a natural way, appealing to nature to act through natural channels.

Whereas the actual miracles attributed to him were of the supernatural order, and worked by spirit in his regard. And their intent was to delude others, if not himself, as though through himself, in order by this way and through these means, were it possible, to gain credit for the supernatural at the expense of the natural.

GOD OR SPIRIT?

WHEN Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, God is Spirit, did he mean to identify the one with the other, as he has been made to seem to do, or was he simply affirming that the Divine Being is, like spirit, wholly withdrawn from the cognizance of man?

He had previously stated, and now repeats, that the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit. But did he not give the key to his meaning here in the words, "The hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father?" So that, according to him, to worship in spirit is not to worship at all, as worship was then understood: this because "such the Father also seeketh."

Under this view, God is spoken of as spirit in the sense that he withholds himself from the knowledge of man; and he is so spoken of to give emphasis to the fact that he thus withholds himself on purpose that he may not be worshipped; and to show that the only worship he desires is to be found in a

truthful life—that is, a life conformed to the nature and surroundings of man, passed in loving trust.

When we speak of God and of spirit, do we ever consider whether these words convey the same ideas to ourselves as they did to those who first employed them?

We have followed the Jews in identifying God with Jehovah. Have we followed the spiritualizing Kabbalists in identifying spirit with God?

Paul, the apostle of the risen Christ, identifies the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 17, 18), that is, Jehovah, with spirit; so that the God of the follower of the risen Christ is undoubtedly a spirit.

And if God is Jehovah, the God of the Jews, the God of the follower of the risen Christ, then is he most certainly a Spirit—a Spirit possessing and exercising the distinctive attribute of spirit, personation; for, in the character of Jehovah, he personates a territorial and tutelary Deity.

This Deity was known to the Midianites as the God of Canaan.

The Midianite prophet, under its inspiration, blesses its chosen people in its name.

The Midianite priest acknowledges that it is greater than all other gods.

But is God Jehovah? Does not Jehovah rather personate God?

The Jews did not at first deny the existence of other gods.

Their declaration (Deut. vi. 4) was, "Jehovah is our God, Jehovah alone."

But in the course of time they made the Divine Unity the basis of their faith, and centred that unity in Jehovah, their territorial and tutelary Deity. And then they absorbed into that Deity the whole pantheon of gods spoken of by name in the Hebrew sacred scriptures.

Thus even to the Jew the divine nature of God was but slowly unfolded; the true conception of God's relations to man only gradually manifested, and, even so, misapplied. And it was not till the advent of Jesus, and through him, that the fulness of that conception received its due expression.

To Jesus, God was a Father.

Through Jesus, God became the Father of his followers.

The one God of the Jew is the individualized and personified Hebrew pantheon.

Is the one Spirit of the Christian such another unified personification?

The word God is in reality the name Jehovah.

This name was abridged by the Jews when it came to be considered ineffable and unutterable; and its ultimate abridgment, *Jod*, was gradually pronounced, and then written, *God*.

Is the word Spirit the Kabbalistic Hebrew word Sephiroth [*Spirot*], with only a single vowel change?

According to the Kabbalists, the Sephiroth were emanations from the Boundless, *En Soph*, or *EnS*.

According to the Christians, the Spirit proceeds from God.

But the doctrines of procession and emanation are as indistinguishable the one from the other as is boundless Being from an infinite God.

Indeed, the identity of the Spirit of the Christians with the Sephiroth of the Kabbalists is even more complete than would at first appear; for the several powers and gifts of the Spirit comprise the distinctive attributes of the Sephiroth; so that these might be even said to have been combined and to coalesce in the Christian's Spirit.

At any rate, while the ancient doctrine is, that the Sephiroth emanate from boundless Being, the modern doctrine teaches that the Spirit proceeds from God; so that the relations of Spirit to God are to be studied through the doctrines of procession and emanation.

Since God is everywhere present, the divine Essence must occupy and completely fill the immensity of space.

That is to say, what science calls space is in reality the vesture of God; or rather, since man

cannot distinguish the vesture from that which it clothes, is itself the incognizable substance of God.

In this substance, spirit—itself identifiable with force in its elementary aspect—and matter exist. The substance of God is, therefore, spirit-material in its nature ; and, since the life of God is the fountain of life, there must be a distinct, distinguishable and definite relation between the spirit and matter through which it imparts life.

If it were permissible for man to consider the processes of the Divine life, those processes otherwise wholly withdrawn from his scrutiny, through the processes of nature submitted to his observation, it would be possible to assume that action in the hidden life of God produced a change in the substance in which it took place ; and that this action, through this change consuming, whether by combustion or otherwise, some of the elements of that substance, in this way sets free a proportion of spirit and of matter in the elemental state.

These veritable products of use in the Divine life would thus, in the creative order, be emanations or processions.

But as emanations or processions they are separated from the hidden life in which they have hitherto taken part, and will have to be passed through further processes and submitted to further

uses—the uses of creation—before they can re-enter the Divine substance and return to the enjoyment of the Divine life.

Taking this as the starting-point of creation, and regarding spirit as latent energy, and matter as the medium, menstruum or material, in, on and through which this energy can alone become potential and act, it is possible to conceive an order of relations under which the successive generations of creation would be produced by the progressive interaction of these emanations.

But under any such view, creation is simply a function in the life of God.

While if creation is simply a function in the life of God, then is the substance of God provided with organs through which that function is discharged.

The heavenly bodies revolve in space, or circulate in the Divine substance.

Are these the organs of God ?

Do they represent a Divine circulation ?

Organic life, submitted to the cognizance of man, is carried on by the circulation of cells ; and upon the circulation of these cells the life of the organism depends.

These cells as they circulate discharge a function.

They supply the tissues through which they pass with elements needful to make good the waste

through use ; and they remove the products of use, the used-up and now waste material.

They thus serve a double purpose ; and the material they remove, though waste and useless, and even detrimental to the uses of the life of the being from which it is thus removed, is removed that it may be applied to further uses in the combined work to which it contributes.

Is this circulation man's guide to the true function of the heavenly bodies?

Do these remove from the Divine substance the elemental spirit and matter which have been set free, as the product of use in the Divine life, that these may be submitted to further uses outside the Divine life, and so prepared to re-enter that life?

Do they re-combine and re-integrate the elemental spirit and matter thus removed, by functional processes proper to themselves, and bring them back to a state in which they can be restored to the Divine substance, and so re-enter the Divine life?

And is the process of creation, including the life of man as an outcome of that process, simply the expression of the functional action of the solar system, of which the earth is a member, in this regard ; the expression of a progressive functional action in which the uses of the life of man play a by no means unimportant part?

The circulation of the heavenly bodies is a circulation of individual, and then of systemic, round central, bodies.

Hence the existence of an ultimate or primary single central body, to which the motions of all the individuals and systems should, through their respective centres be referred, is a reasonable conclusion.

These systems are held together by mutual attraction.

Hence their tendency is to rush together and combine.

An adequate restraining force is thus indicated as holding them apart—a force capable of controlling their mutual attractions, and causing these to make them circulate round each other, and so through the Divine substance miscalled space, within limits determined by that restraining and guiding force.

A natural force suited to this requirement is found in the electrical currents permeating the Divine substance, seeing that bodies similarly electrified are separated from each other and held apart as long as they are so similarly electrified.

Hence all that is necessary is to assume that electrical currents are constantly passing from the central body and permeate the Divine substance, that is, space, in every direction as a radiating

energy, when all the heavenly bodies would be submitted to its influence and so held apart ; and then their thus restrained attractions, and the struggles resulting from this thereon imposed restraint, would maintain the Divine circulation.

That such a force is acting in the universe, and that it is liable to accretions of energy, would appear from the simultaneous occurrence of electrical disturbances, the so-called electrical storms, on the sun and on the earth.

The elemental spirit and matter set free in, and so emanating or proceeding from, the Divine substance through the uses of the Divine life, acted upon by these electrical currents and roused from the latent state, would be at once brought into activity and caused to interact.

The interaction thus introduced, as combustion or otherwise, would produce gases, aqueous or vesicular vapour, and Kosmic dust ; and these, gathered together by simple aggregation and agglomeration, by nebular condensation or vesicular coalescence, would either prove the starting-points of new solar and planetary bodies, or be attracted by and absorbed into the already existing and circulating heavenly bodies, within the sphere of whose influence they were produced.

It would thus appear that such bodies as the

heavenly bodies may have been primarily constituted of elementary spirit and matter loosely combined in a rudimentary state ; that this would have been the natural way of producing them.

But under such a view, they have been so combined that they may be submitted to influences and passed through processes which will prepare and fit them to re-enter the Divine life, from which they have been extruded and temporarily excluded.

On the planet earth, the influences calculated to initiate these processes, and promote the changes to be produced through their functional activity, are solar influences.

Spirit and matter have to be more closely united, to be unified, so to say, or brought back to the spiritu-material condition, that they may re-pass into the Divine substance.

This intimate union can only or more easily be re-effected by organizing processes.

A solar influence, acting through electrical currents, produced the primary watery globe of the earth from aqueous vapour by vesicular cohesion ; each vesicle having been, in this instance, a temporary or evanescent cell.

In this watery globe, thus constituted of elemental spirit and matter, a rudimentary body and a rudimentary spirit were loosely combined.

This watery globe, as it passed through the Divine substance with the system of which it was a remote member, gradually gathered up the solid material so necessary to its further functional activity.

A second solar influence acting through electrical currents on this primary cell, the watery globe, kindled it interiorly; by the volcanic action thus initiated bringing the three physiological elements, water, air, earth, into vitalizable and viable relations; and through the volcanic action, while thus acting, produced the inorganic cell, as the first step in the process of organization, the foundation on which the whole superstructure was to rest.

Each inorganic cell was, like its mother, the earth, constituted of a spirit and a body in somewhat closer combination; of a spirit-germ clothed in matter in a germinal state; that the spirit-germ, acting upon its material vesture, might prepare both for the next step in advance.

A third solar influence acting through electrical currents on the inorganic cell, through the activity thus superinduced, produced therefrom the organic cell. By the instrumentality of this cell the active life of the earth was to be constituted.

Each organic cell was, like its first parent, the earth, constituted of a spirit and a body in somewhat

closer combination ; of a rudimentary spirit, of which its cellular vesture was the rudimentary body.

And now, by a process of alternate life and death, carried on and promoted by the combined influences which had produced the natural order from such simple elements, the progressing work was more rapidly advanced.

Under this process, each rudimentary spirit passed through a succession of embodied lives in a series of advancing forms, and so became an advancing spirit.

Under this process the advancing forms were progressively advanced by the life uses of the advancing spirits embodied therein ; while the advancing spirits through rudimentary uses acquired conscious instincts, appetites and aptitudes, with organs through which to apply them, and slowly prepared themselves for the intelligent uses of an ultimate personified life.

Under this process the advancing spirit gradually matured itself and advanced in the order of intelligence, until, in the human form, it became capable of learning the difference between good and evil, that in this its human form, and while learning this lesson through the uses of its human life, it might avoid the one and do the other.

And now a fourth solar influence, acting through

electrical currents on the organic cell in the human form, produces therefrom the psychic cell.

Each psychic cell, unlike its first parent, the earth, is constituted of spirit and matter in the closest possible union short of unification, which is the condition gained in the living soul.

Through the interaction of psychic cells in the human, promoted by the natural uses of a natural life passed in avoiding evil and doing good, the human soul is generated, developed and matured, or produced ; produced under the continued combined action of the several solar influences which have hitherto carried on the advancing work ; matured during and through the natural use of the natural life of the natural being whose perfection has been throughout the end and aim of the creative work ; but engendered by a solar action proceeding from the central body or sun.

At every step in the natural evolution by which creation is carried on, spirit is the worker, matter that through and whereon spirit works.

At the commencement of each succeeding stage of this natural evolution, the organs of God give the initiating impulse, and promote the influences under the guidance and control of which the progressing evolution is carried on.

Throughout the entire evolution, the aim thereof

has been the creation of the divine human by the conversion of spirit into soul.

There are three distinct stages in this process of conversion :

Spirit and matter are individualized in the animal.

They are personified in the human.

They are unified in the divine human.

In each of these stages there is a functional interaction between spirit and matter, the spirit and matter which enter into the constitution of the individual being, that each may finally take part in the unified result.

Hence in each of these stages, as in the successive preliminary and intermediate steps, spirit, like matter, is a simple agent—an agent working blindly under subjection. Throughout, God, working by special organs with proper functions, gives the impulse and guides the work ; and in the work itself, spirit is a co-worker with matter, which will take an equal share with spirit in the completed work, when each loses its distinctive characteristics in resultant spiritu-material being.

But the function in the life of God of which the natural order is the outcome is a two-fold function ; for though the creation of the human soul is its aim in the order of evolution, the restoration of spirit and matter in a renewed condition to the

Divine substance is the proper end of the functional life of God, that these may re-enter, once more take part in, and even contribute to, the Divine life. For there is a constant procession of spirit and matter from the Divine substance, to be submitted to functional action in the natural order, and an as constant regression of the combined product of that functional action to the substance from which its separated elements had been originally extruded.

Thus spirit, like matter, proceeds from the Divine substance as a product of the uses of the Divine life, and can only be restored thereto or re-enter that life by subjection to natural processes.

These natural processes are expressions of the Divine life, and the functional means by which that life is maintained ; for they are all carried on by special organs under adequate control.

In these processes, spirit is never free from control in the natural order, that is, in carrying on the divine work. Functional submission, in which itself is practically effaced, and non-volitional action, are its distinctive and peculiar characteristics here ; obedience to the natural, under which it works and should work, as incumbent on it as on its co-worker, matter, that the work may be duly carried on.

But if so, since God works through natural process, and natural process is functional action in the Divine

life, the way of nature, the way of the submission of spirit to the natural law, is God's way ; and therefore everything which runs counter to the way of nature and counteracts the natural law is opposed to and so cannot be God's way.

Hence whenever the question, God or Spirit ? presents itself to man, as involving his allegiance to the natural or the supernatural in the moral order, he must turn from the supernatural to the natural, or renounce the teaching of Spirit, through revelation or otherwise, to follow the teachings of God, speaking to and guiding him through his natural conscience, which as the voice of nature is the voice of God.

Even in their present disguised setting, what say the words of Jesus? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*"

SOUL OR SPIRIT?

MAN is a living matrix.

This matrix is constituted of a body and a spirit.

The body of man, which is a very complicated organism, is the offspring of a combined generative and creative evolution.

In the generative evolution of the human body, parents of a lower type of being are enabled to produce modified and modifiable offspring; offspring of a higher type of being than their own; offspring capable of being raised to a yet higher condition in the natural order; and of transmitting this higher state, with a tendency to yet further elevation, to their own offspring. And the parents are respectively enabled, nay caused, to produce improved and improvable types of being by the uses they make of their passing lives; the improvement so introduced following and being proportioned to the improving condition of their own bodies under the effectuating life uses.

In the generative evolution of the human body,

an advancing disembodied spirit chooses an advanced parentage, through which to obtain re-embodiment in a higher order. It seeks this parentage in that order for which, through the living uses of previous embodied existences, it has prepared itself; and, having been successful in its search, improves the organization of the embryonic body it is building up. And it does this more fully to adapt it to the uses, for which it is preparing, of the re-embodied life it is about to commence as the improved offspring of its selected parents.

Hence in the generative evolution of the human body two influences are at work.

The tendency of the parents to produce a modified and modifiable offspring.

The tendency of the spirit, about to be clothed in flesh through the instrumentality of its selected parents, to mould the body it is assuming after its own bent.

And under the influence of this double tendency, a constant advance from a lower to a higher type has taken place in the order of nature; an advance commencing from the germ state and ending in the human form.

In the creative evolution of the human body the embodied spirit has, through the uses it has made of its successive embodied lives, developed its or-

ganic faculties ; and by doing this has so improved the organism to be reproduced in its offspring that a further advance in organic being is secured.

Thus by a combined process of generative and creative development, the body of man has been gradually produced by a progressive advance in the natural order from lower to higher types of being, until from a simple germ the human form has been attained—attained by evolution through natural selection.

The spirit of man, which is an energizing principle, is the product of the interaction of spirit and matter under the stimulus and control of solar influences, applied through electrical currents.

The spirit of man, like its human envelope, commences from the germ state.

Its earliest embodied form is that of the cell, of which the cellular structure is the germinal body of the therein germinating spirit.

From this germ it is gradually evolved by the life uses of successive embodied existences, in the course of which it passes through a succession of advancing forms, alternately following and leading in this its onward and upward progress, until its human embodiment is gained.

But none of these forms are proper to spirit.

They are bodily forms evolved by spirit from

matter by natural process, through the uses of life for the uses of life ; and when these uses are completed, and the spirit passes once more to the disembodied state, it finds itself again without a proper form, unless indeed that of the sphere or cell.

There is thus a marked difference in the relations of evolution to the evolving body and evolving spirit : for, at each successive step in these evolutions, the spirit, at the death of the individual, simply passes to the disembodied state, there to await re-embodiment ; whereas the body from which it has departed is left to perish, or be dissolved and reduced to its ultimate elements.

Thus each body in succession is simply a link in the chain of evolution, and passes away when its share therein is accomplished, leaving the continuation of the work itself to its offspring ; whereas each spirit in succession passes on to continue that work in another body.

The work of evolution has thus a two-fold aim.

The transmutation of bodily form into personal being by generative and creative development.

The transmission of individualized spirit through advancing bodily forms to an ultimate personality.

That is to say, the successive bodies through which advancing and maturing spirit passes in the process of evolution are simply matrices, which

impress upon it, or from which it gains by the uses of life, those energies, qualities and faculties, which it applies to the uses of renewed life.

Of these matrices, the human form completes the series.

Thus the evolution of spirit is, so far, the apparent aim of generative and creative development.

But spirit on disembodiment passes to the formless state.

And yet in the formless state it cannot use the faculties it has acquired.

To do this it requires the organs of an organized body.

Something more than the mere evolution of spirit must therefore be the actual aim of generative and creative development.

Through evolution the human form has been slowly gained.

Can this form, with its complicated organization, have been painfully and progressively moulded only to be discarded ?

It has been gained by making appetite the incentive to the uses of life.

It has been so gained that the more vigorous forms might develop their own vigour and transmit a more vigorous offspring ; that they might do this while and even by destroying, or starving out, the

less vigorous forms, so that the most vigorous might possess themselves of the fruits of the earth.

By the uses of life, habits were contracted and tendencies thereto transmitted.

By the same uses of life, these habits and tendencies were acquired by or impressed on the embodied spirits.

Thus appetite became the characteristic quality and distinguishing mark of the developing and developed spirit, as, through their spirit-developers, it was the incentive of the developing and developed animated bodily forms.

And thus the evolved human spirit was a spirit governed by appetite and trained to self-seeking. And this is the inherent tendency of man.

But if something more than the mere evolution of spirit is the true aim of generative and creative evolution, that something more is to be gained by the embodied spirit of man through the uses it makes of its human life.

Man learns what he needs by observation and experience.

The spirit of man shows what it needs by its unconquerable dread of disembodiment.

Man desires happiness, and would find it in the enjoyment of life, did he not seek it through appetite, which speedily palls; through self-indulgence,

which, sated, loathes that from which it had sought satisfaction.

The spirit of man dreads disembodiment, which will deprive it of the power of enjoying.

Man sees that the happiness of the animal world is drawn from the enjoyment of life.

But he also sees that this enjoyment is invariably gained at the expense of the enjoyment of another ; nay, through the sacrifice not only of the enjoyment, and through this, of the happiness, but even of the life of that other for the enjoyment of the enjoying individual. And then, interpreting this through the loathing produced by the sated enjoyment of appetite, and through the suffering the unrestrained indulgence of appetite produces in the animal world and the cruelty it develops, determines that enjoyment is a necessary cause of evil, and is thus evil in itself.

Man comes into the world absolutely ignorant that he is the outcome of a process which has produced and is developing him by the instrumentality of an elaborate evolution.

He little thinks how this process of evolution has depended on and been promoted by that which he, thus in his ignorance, does not hesitate to term "evil."

He sees nothing but the immediate working ; knows nothing of the antecedent processes, and of

the two-fold aim of the whole: the evolution of the spirit and of the body of man.

He is ignorant of the two-fold outcome of the work: the production of dominant and dominated, of aggressive and victim spirits.

And yet it is precisely in these that the guide should be sought to the understanding of the work in operation, the divine work going on in man.

Of these two classes of spirits, the dominant are the creative spirits.

These are the developers of form, the evolvers of the most perfect types of animated being, and therefore the progressive creators of the human body.

These gain a full enjoyment of life as they progressively develop the bodies through which they are enjoying; and the development of bodily form depends upon this full enjoyment.

This enjoyment, therefore, cannot be evil in them, since so much results therefrom; so great a good. Indeed, without it, creation in the natural order could not take place.

But gaining as they do a full enjoyment of life through the reckless indulgence of their dominant and dominating appetites and propensities, to these no compensation is due.

They have enjoyed; but, even as they enjoyed,

they enjoyed at the expense of others ; and these have been their victims.

To these, the dominated or victim spirits, compensation is therefore due. And they receive it in two ways.

They are hurried along the several successive stages of existence through which they have to pass, by the shortening of their embodied lives, and thus enter the human form more rapidly.

They enter the human form as dominated or victim spirits.

These two classes of spirits, constituting and comprising as a whole the spirit of man, enter the human form for a purpose.

In the life of man, spirit aspires after permanent form or personality.

Through his human life, man seeks for happiness.

In his search after happiness, man learns the lesson of good and evil ; learns that, while self-seeking is good and not evil in the subordinate kingdoms of nature, it is evil and not good in himself ; and is thus led to perceive the great truth that as evil in himself it is, as far as possible, to be avoided.

But in reducing this lesson to practice in his uses of life, man has a difficulty ; and this difficulty is far greater in the dominant than in the dominated embodied spirits ; because the former, through their

training in self-indulgence, are now governed by appetite ; while the latter, owing to their habitually imposed sacrifice of self, find the forgetfulness of self comparatively easy.

Hence the antecedent existences of spirit have an important bearing on the life of man, and are indeed the determining causes of the bent of that life.

The life of man has a deep meaning in it ; but man is as ignorant of that meaning as he is that he has passed through previous existences in other forms.

His aspirations lead him to hope that a higher life awaits him in a future state of being ; but of this also he has no knowledge.

He possesses but the life of the present ; and since he cannot live that life in knowledge, he must perforce live it in trust.

He has been placed in the world ; he did not place himself there.

He has been placed on earth to live, and, after a brief space, to die. And though he shrinks from death, so intimately is life allied thereto that he can only live through inflicting death : for even the vegetarian must kill to eat ; must take the life of the plant that he may live ; must follow the law of nature, which is the law of his being, and, as the law of his being, is the law of God.

He is called to live in the midst of certain surroundings ; and for the most part cannot determine these. He is born to and bound by them.

Bound by the law of death unto life, and guided by circumstances—governed thereby even when seeming to govern—such is the course of the life of man.

During that life, happiness is his aim ; the power of perpetuating that happiness, his aspiration.

But, learning the lesson of good and evil, he gradually perceives that the root of evil is self-seeking ; the root of good, the forgetfulness of self. And then he finds that the only incentive to the forgetfulness of self is love—that love which absolutely forgets self in its affections.

And here the developed tendencies of spirit assert themselves ; for the aggressive or combatant spirits cannot forget self. The advancement of self, the good of self, the aggrandizement and glorification of self, are at all times the objects of their aspirations ; their past reflecting itself in the present, and tending to reproduce itself in the future.

But even so is wisdom justified in her designs, nature in its processes, and God in his works : for the work of these workers was needed that the creation of man might be accomplished ; while their further government by appetite removes them from

a work which they could thenceforth only mar, since the happiness sought through that work would not be happiness to them.

Not so the dominated or victim spirits. These, through enforced submission to the appetites of their aggressive brethren, have been trained by suffering to the possibility of self-forgetfulness ; and, through enduring a prolonged course of disregard and indifference, have learnt the value of affection.

Hence in these, love finds a suitable matrix for the impersonation it seeks in the generation of the soul.

Love is seeking incarnation in man.

This incarnation can only take place in those to whom the power and constancy of loving are as essential as the breath of life.

Hence the man in whom the generation of the soul is taking place, is the man whose whole being is stamped with a loving forgetfulness of self ; while the man in whom spirit is maturing, is the man whose being is absorbed by the desire of benefiting self.

Of these, the one will pass to the soul state as a divine incarnation, while the other returns to the domain of spirit.

But the divine alone is eternal.

Hence that which has failed to attain to the

divine must ultimately return to the state from which it originally sprang.

The issue put before individualizing spirit at the outset of its career, is divine incarnation or ultimate dissolution.

It can only attain to the former condition by passing, as the spirit of man, through natural regeneration to the soul state, or being changed into a living soul.

It will certainly attain to the latter if it perseveres in a self-seeking career.

It must pass to one of these states when, at the death thereof, it finally quits its human body.

Failing to attain to the one, it will enter the other.

Hence the question submitted to man at his birth, and to be decided by the uses he makes of his human life, is the all-important one, Soul or Spirit?

INPERSONATION IN THE DIVINE ORDER.

God is latent love, in the sense that the existence of love testifies to the presence of God.

Love is the outcome of life, and therefore a witness, to those possessed thereby, of the actuality of the life of God.

The life of God, viewed as life and as the source of life, is two-fold—active and passive.

Of the active life of God, man has, can have, no knowledge; it is a hidden life as far as he is concerned, and, like the existence of the Divine Being, wholly withdrawn from his cognizance.

The passive life of God is identified with the workings of nature. It is a functional life, carried on by organs circulating in the Divine substance; the functional life by which the active life of God is provided for and sustained.

Nature is not God. It is at once the expression and the outcome of the processes by which the life of God is maintained.

The life of God, however unintelligible it may be to man, is thus seen to be a natural life ; a life provided for in a natural way and carried on by natural means.

Like the life of man, it is primarily an organic existence ; that is to say, it is dependent on or provided for, preserved through and perpetuated by, organs.

But unlike the life of man, in the life of God provision is made for the renewing, removal and reproduction of organs which have completed the course and fulfilled the function temporarily allotted to them ; whereby stability is secured through seemingly unstable relations.

While, again unlike the life of man, the life of God is, in its essence, an impersonal life ; a life absolutely free from formal limitations and anthropomorphic relations. For though man is made in the image and after the likeness of God, this image is found in the fact that the life of man is, like the life of God, the expression of organic function ; this likeness, in the realization that, while the life of God is manifested through, the life of man is the outcome of, a circulating system.

God is latent love.

The peculiar property of love is, that it is perpetually seeking to express itself.

Hence in the creation God is seeking objects of affection.

The life of God is an organic life.

Hence in the creation God is seeking organs through which to express that affection.

The creation is carried on by natural process in the natural order.

Hence in the creation God is seeking natural objects for, and natural organs through which to express, that affection.

The outcome of this natural creation is man; a natural being, created by natural process, in the natural order and in the natural way—that is, in the way of nature.

Hence man is at once the natural object and the natural organ through which God will ultimately express the latent love of his divine essence and being.

God is latent love.

The characteristic mark of love is, that through its influence will is absorbed by and disappears in or becomes desire; for will is the outcome of opposition and fruit of antagonism, and, as self-assertion, seeks its ends through an enforced submission and constrained obedience; while love, in the forgetfulness of self, would kindle reciprocal desire, that affection may be drawn out by affection.

Hence in the creation God is seeking objects of affection from which will has been eliminated, and organs of affection in which will has disappeared in or become changed into desire. And since these objects and organs are the outcome of functional action and produced by natural process, will is to be absorbed in them and converted into desire in a natural way, that the latent love of the Divine may find its natural vent through the human.

God is latent love.

This latent love is in the creation seeking to express itself.

It can only express itself through organs and on objects.

These organs and objects have been slowly and gradually produced by progressive development in the natural order; a development in which there has been a regular and steady advance from the germ state to the human form.

Being itself latent, it can only gradually unfold itself in, and manifest itself through, these organs; commencing similarly from the germ state, and passing through rudimentary conditions to a more perfect expression.

Physical attraction is, in the natural order, the germ of love.

Chemical affinity is the rudimentary condition

through which it next passes, to embodiment in the inorganic and then in the organic cell.

And now, in organic life, it is subjected to a peculiar ordeal.

Physical attraction and chemical affinity have to be matured into an overmastering desire, to which all other impulses give way, that this desire may be gradually transformed into, be finally absorbed by, and so openly manifest itself as, love.

And simultaneously with this, the human form, which is to be at once the organ and object of this transformable, transforming and transformed desire, and the instrument through which alone it can be converted into and manifest itself as love, has to be created.

Now to the advance of this form the whole work of creation is subservient; to its perfecting, the whole life of the world has to contribute; to its matured excellence, the transient well-being of all has to be sacrificed.

Hence appetite, which greedily and selfishly appropriates all to the needs or pleasures or enjoyments of self, reckless of the consequences to others; which from small beginnings gradually unfolds itself, through the successive embodiments of spirit in an advancing order, until in man it gains its strongest expression, is the great factor here.

And, thus considered, the whole creation is simply the expression of a latent love seeking embodiment that it may give full vent to its impulses.

But so far it has not shown itself as love.

Indeed, considering appetite—the maturing fruit of physical attraction and chemical affinity—through its consequences, to the superficial reasoner love would seem to be so wholly wanting that the possibility of its emerging from such elements might well be doubted and even denied.

And yet God is latent love.

And in the creation latent love is seeking embodiment.

God is latent love ; and this latent love is seeking to express itself through the human.

That is to say, the Divine is seeking embodiment in the human.

Now, that the Divine may be embodied in the human, it is necessary that in man appetite should give way to desire, in order gradually to pass through affection into love.

That is to say, that the human may become Divine, it is necessary that in man appetite should be cast out by love.

So far, every step in the evolution and embodiment of latent love has been gained by natural process in the natural order, or taken through the way of nature.

In this way of nature, spirit has been throughout the agent by whose activity the inertia of matter has been overcome, and the evolution achieved.

In this natural evolution, spirit has acquired its power, or become potential, through the matter with which it has successively combined itself or been clothed.

By this natural evolution, spirit has gradually matured itself, while perfecting the bodily forms through the living uses of which its own maturity was attained.

These living uses were the uses of life ; in each instance in succession, the natural use of a natural life.

Through this natural evolution, latent love, using spirit as its active agent, has been preparing a matrix by the use of which it may at length take embodiment and manifest itself.

This matrix is the human form ; while the latent love seeking to manifest itself in that form is the otherwise unknown and unknowable God, whose only manifestation is love.

The preparation for this manifestation of the Divine in the human takes place during the life of man ; is promoted by the uses the individual makes of his natural life ; and will therefore be completed in those, and in those only, who, by a loving use of

their natural lives, make it possible for the Divine to find through them its human vesture.

This vesture is the human soul.

The human soul is the true child of God.

The generation of the human soul is accomplished during the life of man.

In this generation it is necessary that man should co-operate.

But man can co-operate only in one way—by making a loving use of his natural life, after the way of nature.

To make this loving use, he must choose the loving way—the way of unselfish love.

And in this power of choice man possesses what has been technically termed free-will.

Now this power of choice has been permitted to man because the act of choosing, as its first demonstration, is of the very essence of love, is the root of the implanted affection.

But this power of choice carries with it of necessity an important qualification of the attributes of the human ; for, failing to make the necessary choice, man fails to become the object of the associated change ; and failing to become the object of the associated change, fails to attain the proposed end of his being. For man is only potentially a child of God ; and only in those who make a loving use

of their natural lives can the love of God manifest itself, and so God reveal himself in man or become incarnate.

God is seeking to become incarnate in man.

This incarnation is, can only be defined as, the embodiment of love in the human soul.

Hence it can only take place in those in whom love is gaining the ascendancy.

And hence the sign that God is working in man, and producing the generation of the soul, is the progressive advance of love as the motive impulse of the individual.

God desires that two things should be accomplished during and by the life of man.

God desires but does not will the accomplishment of these two things, because to will this would be to deprive man of his liberty of action and so render the evolution of love impossible through him; for love cannot enter where the power of choosing is absent, seeing that freedom of choice is essential thereto.

God desires that the life of man should be so passed as to promote two objects.

The transformation of appetite by a gradual passage, through desire and affection, into love, which is man's share in the work, the co-operation he is desired to give.

The conversion of spirit into soul, which is the gradual embodiment of the Divine in the human, and is the especial work of God.

These are the true end and aim of creation.

When these two objects are attained, that aim is gained, that end reached, and the desire of God fulfilled.

But what are this transformation and this conversion but the outcome of the evolution and the achieving of the embodiment of love?

And what are this evolution and embodiment but the impersonation of the Divine in the human, in the natural, which is the Divine, order?

PERSONATION IN THE SPIRIT ORDER.

Spirit is latent energy, seeking to become potential.

Spirit becomes potential through association or union with matter.

Spirit is brought into association or union with matter by the electrical currents which permeate the Divine substance.

By association with matter, spirit is individualized or separated from the diffused elemental spirit passed into the Divine substance by the uses of the divine life, and gathered into and combined as an energized and energizing matrix.

This energized and energizing matrix is constituted of two factors, spirit and matter, which, while acting in association, act through antagonism, the inherent inertia of matter resisting and controlling the active tendencies of spirit. And this antagonism is the determining principle of the associated or combined action of spirit and matter as long as the association or union lasts.

Thus each energized and energizing matrix of individualized spirit, with its coalescing and combined matter, is constituted of a body and a spirit—the individualized spirit with its combined and coalescing matter through whose association it originated—in a state of unstable union.

The planet earth is such an energized and energizing matrix.

In this matrix, the atmosphere, which envelops and permeates the terrestrial body, and which in motion is termed wind, represents its individualized spirit, being, in fact, the transparent vesture in which that spirit is primarily clothed ; while the coalescing and cohering mass of the globe is the material body of the planet.

In this simple primary relation, the spirit of the earth, though individualized and embodied, remains in the elementary condition, and is only capable of initiating and carrying on functional action. And in this condition—owing to its latent character and mediate relations, as the primary potential agent called into being by the Divine for use as an unconscious instrument, in functional development—it receives all its impulses from the Divine Originator working through it ; for the functional action of spirit is the organic action of God.

Thus spirit, in its mediate action, is the instrument of the providence of God.

The function committed to the elementary spirit of the earth is the development of the life of the world, and the maintenance of that life in its organic relations.

The life itself is generated by the special and peculiar, that is, the proper action of the divine solar organs.

These impart consecutive impulses to the interacting spirit and matter, and thus produce physical attraction, chemical affinity and their opposites in successive stages; and then, through these, introduce the inorganic, to be followed by the organic and culminate in the psychic germ or cell. But these impulses, agencies, germs and cells, once introduced, as the instruments of the development to ensue, the functional evolution of the life of the world is committed to the spirit of the earth.

The life of the world is thus, in its beginnings, an unconscious, an elementary life; just as the spirit of the earth is, in its beginnings, an unconscious, an elementary spirit.

The conscious life of the world is derived from and the outcome of its unconscious life, produced therefrom by gradual evolution, through organic

development and use ; the physical from the elemental, the physiological from the physical, the spiritual from the physiological, and the psychical from the spiritual.

The consciousness of the spirit of the earth, with its intelligence and volition, are derived from and the outcome of the conscious life of the world.

They are the accumulated and accumulating product of the spirit evolution of that life, and progressively reflect the advance in those qualities which cumulatively culminate in itself. For every spirit, on finally returning to the disembodied state, is re-united with the spirit of the earth ; and thus each imparts to it all it has acquired through and brought with it from its evolutionary course. But in so parting with its evolutionally derived and matured energies, in so re-uniting with, merging in or melting into its mediate source, the dissolving spirit passes into the latent state—to remain therein in a potential condition as a possible spirit agency for occasional use, circumstances favouring, in the intermittent volitional reactions of spirit on the advancing life of the world.

Hence the interest the spirit of the earth takes in the advance of its spirit offspring in their evolutionary career, is that of a self-seeker seeking its own advancement. And it strives to promote their spiri-

tual as opposed to their natural development, because its own inorganic embodiment unfits it for the comprehension of any but spiritual aims and desires.

Viewed under its simplest aspect, through its symbol and physical vesture, the atmosphere of the earth, which not only envelops the planetary body, but permeates the whole of its constituent elements, it is a reservoir from which all individualizing spirit flows, and into which every individualized spirit, after passing through its final embodiment, returns.

But even so regarded, it is not a mere reservoir ; for it has the power of transiently reproducing to temporarily use that which it thus re-absorbs into itself ; and this is why spirits so returning to their source can be said neither to be annihilated nor to exist. They exist potentially in the latent state, as has been already stated, and can be momentarily recalled from that state. But they are only so recalled to act for or as the spirit in the individuality of which their own individuality has disappeared ; for the spirit of the earth is the centre or focus from which the combined forces of evolved spirit are reflected or act ; from which each therein merged spirit on transient re-individualization derives its delegated powers of action.

Hence the desire of the conscious spirit of the earth, in this unconsciously reflecting the desire of

God, is to produce, develop and mature personified offspring ; that in and through these it may ultimately attain a mediate and enduring personality. And it aspires after such a personality because it expects, by advancing its individualized into a mediate and diversely personified condition, to change its derived and unstable into a proper and lasting volitional action, which is the aim of its desire ; in which again it unconsciously reflects the desire of God.

But it can only gain this mediate personality, as it has already gained its immediate individuality, by the direct agency of embodiment through continuous interaction with matter, in the ever-varying action and reaction of nature.

And yet, even while working with and through matter, spirit, because controlled thereby, is in perpetual antagonism therewith. Hence, perceiving that, whereas while bodies successively perish, the spirits survive, and after each re-embodiment return to the spirit state with a quickened intelligence and strengthened will, its expectation is to attain in and through its offspring to a spirit personality in which the noblest form, joined to the highest order of intelligence and acting through the most perfect will, shall be perpetuated.

Now in this expectation it is looking for a spirit

form ; a form wholly dissociated from the material bodies through the use of which the maturing faculties it is developing are acquired ; a form wholly dissociated from material embodiment, because it has realized that the material bodies with which its development is associated are perishable and perishing ; a form therefore wholly dissociated from embodiment, that the spirit world may continue to subsist when the world of matter disappears.

But in striving to realize this expectation, unconscious that the state it aspires to for, the condition it desires to gain through, its offspring—that of a disembodied persistent personality—is an impossible state, an unattainable condition, it separates itself from, and, as far as may be, opposes its action to the desire and design of God.

And the spirit of the earth thus separates its action from the Divine because it perceives that its body, the earth, subject as it is to many vitiating changes, and exposed as it is to many deteriorating influences, is gradually wearing out ; and it hopes in this way to survive that body, with its disembodied offspring, and establish an independent dominion in the heavens, that is in space, free from the vicissitudes and apart from the associations and counteracting attractions by which its present mediate existence is beset.

Spirit is latent energy, seeking to become potential through evolution.

Spirit, like love, has to be slowly developed with the developing life of the world ; for it is only through the maturing uses of life that spirit successively acquires consciousness, instinct, intelligence and volition. And the spirit of the earth only acquires these attributes and faculties through its offspring ; to which it is a simple providence and nothing more. And, while acting as a simple providence in the natural order, the providence of spirit is the providence of God ; for spirit is the agent of God in carrying on the divine function.

But spirit, owing to its original want of consciousness, is unconscious of the existence of God.

Hence, presuming that the work it is carrying on through the life of the world is its own work, and perceiving that in the human form it has gained the highest personality it is capable of producing, the endeavour of the spirit of the earth now is to effect such a change in man as that the human spirit on leaving its perishing body may be capable of maintaining a persistent personality, and be endowed with qualities, faculties and desires, suitable to the spirit state for which it is to be fitted.

The principal obstacle it has to contend with here is the animal appetites man has contracted in and

through his successive animal existences; for the unrestrained indulgence of these in human life produces an animalized and degraded spirit; a spirit which on disembodiment still clings to the earth, whose fate it will ultimately share, its uses of life having made it earth-bound, so to say.

The aim of the spirit of the earth thus necessarily is to de-animalize man by checking the indulgence of animal appetite; and to spiritualize him by substituting spiritual aspirations for animal desires.

This it seeks to do by the introduction of superhuman agencies working through supernatural channels, that the tendencies of nature, to which it attributes the proclivities of man, may be efficiently counteracted; for the spirit of the earth can see no way of utilizing natural impulse, being wholly ignorant of the Divine method in this regard.

The several religions of the earth are the instruments through which these agencies are successively applied.

The spirit of the earth is unconscious of the existence of God.

It is therefore unaware of his designs, and ignorant that itself is a simple agent in the carrying out of these designs.

It has been true to these designs, and therefore working with God, in the development of the life of

the world and the production of man. But in its endeavour to supernaturalize man, it traverses that work and separates itself from God.

And it traverses that work and separates itself from God by formulating a design of its own contrary to the Divine intentions, and therefore opposed to the design of God.

God, as latent love, is seeking impersonation through embodiment in the human soul.

Hence the aim of God is incarnation.

Spirit, as latent energy, is seeking personation in the human form for and through its offspring, with a view to their and its own ultimate disembodiment.

Hence the aim of spirit is disincarnation.

Thus, while God is working through nature to carry out a natural design and bring the same to its natural fruition, spirit, on separating from God, is working against nature to a supernatural intent.

But in so working, spirit is a true, an unmistakable personator, and makes personation its characteristic mark.

The spirit of the earth, ignorant of the existence of the Divine Being, thinks itself to be God ; and, through the religions of the earth constituting itself the god of this world—whose providence, in the order of God's providence, it is—personates the Divine.

But in its personations it can but personate the human form, and temporarily assume or use the personality of its matured spirit offspring.

Hence the anthropomorphisms of revealed Deity.

The spirit offspring of the spirit of the earth, as they successively pass from the embodied to the disembodied state, lose their temporarily acquired personality.

Hence in factitiously re-assuming the form that once was theirs, or re-appearing, they are only personators, personating apparitions—apparitions personating what they once were, but on disembodiment ceased to be ; for with disembodiment, though individuality may remain, personality ceases.

Spirit is latent energy, seeking to become potential through spiritual evolution.

Spirit can only become potential through association or union with matter.

Hence the spirit of the earth can only act through material, material-using or materialized mediums.

This is why the basis of religion is mediation.

The matured spirit of man on disembodiment returns to the spirit state.

In that state, the faculties it has acquired through the developing uses of a succession of developing lives pass again into the latent condition from which they have been called forth, like the original

force through the applied action of which, in the embodied state, they originated, were developed and matured ; and they can then only be re-applied to their accustomed uses through re-association with matter, that is, through materialized or organized mediums.

Hence the spirits of the departed, in calling out their latent faculties and putting them to uses, whether at the instigation of the spirit of the earth or their own desire, can only do this through a mediumistic channel.

Such a use of these faculties is a supernatural use ; a use in which spirit, subsisting outside the natural order, subjects the uses of the natural order to its own purposes.

But in so subjecting the uses of the natural order to its own purposes, its power of giving expression to its own faculties is limited by the capabilities and capacities of the faculties through which it is seeking to express itself.

When a spirit desires, or is sent by a higher spirit, to communicate with man, it has first to seek a suitable medium.

Having found this medium, it has to impress it with a sense of its presence and power.

This it generally does through vision ; by causing the medium to have a vision of itself, or to perceive

some phenomenon through which its presence and action can be recognized.

This phenomenon is sometimes that of a voice, speaking occasionally from without, as a voice from heaven; but more usually from within, when the unvocalized utterance of an inner voice attracts the attention of its percipient.

The vision is generally subjective, like the subjective utterance just noticed. But sometimes an actual apparition of the spirit seeking to communicate takes place, when the medium has sufficient mediumistic power to enable the spirit artificially to materialize a temporary and factitious body, like unto the body it was clothed with in the flesh, or the body of the one it is seeking to personate.

Hence every communicating is a personating spirit. And hence it is impossible to be certain of any spirit seeking to communicate, that it is the spirit of the person it represents itself to be.

These channels of communication are always sought for a purpose.

This purpose usually is to possess or inspire the medium as a teaching channel.

In religion, the spirit of the earth uses the higher matured spirits in this way.

These sometimes appear and make themselves known in their own characters or those of each other.

At other times they represent the spirit of the earth or god of this world, the only god known to them, who indeed uses their forms for this purpose.

When they appear or make themselves known to man, and open communications with him, they make revelations to the selected individual—pseudo-revelations these really are ; give him commandments for his guidance, and instruct him to communicate these to others ; in this way endeavouring through him to mould the lives of men on a given model and fashion them on an indicated pattern, so as to lead them in the designed direction.

The peculiarity of such revelations is that, starting from what the experience of man has proved to be true, they gradually leaven this with the false, until at length they substitute the false for the true, or cause the one to be lost sight of in the other.

They have two great difficulties to contend with as teachers ; difficulties due to the nature of man, the natural tendency of his methods and influence of his surroundings. For experience proves that religion gradually loses its hold on the life and then on the mind of man, and so tends to wear itself out by a process of natural decay.

This process of decay depends upon two causes ; and these are the difficulties with which the spirit teachers have to contend.

It is greatly helped by the imperfection of the channels through which the teachings are communicated, handed down and sought to be perpetuated. And owing to this, these are misunderstood, misrepresented, and then gradually corrupted by doctrinal development, on the one hand, and doctrinal degradation on the other. And this is the way of tradition.

It is completed by the dialectic change constantly going on in the spoken as represented by the written language of man. For under this change the idioms of one generation convey a different sense to its successors; and in consequence of this, inspired writings are variously understood and interpreted from age to age, or acquire a fluctuating character and speak with an uncertain voice.

It is owing to these difficulties—difficulties opposed to them by the nature of man—difficulties reflected in the processes by which he endeavours to perpetuate the information he has acquired—that the spirit teachers are thwarted in their work, and that the work itself, the religion of the world, becomes a halting work, and is so diversified in character. And this is why so many different kinds and forms of religion have succeeded and continue to succeed each other.

But then these are the means by which the con-

flict between the natural and the supernatural is carried on and perpetuated.

Now the necessity for the constant renewing and perpetuation of the channels and methods of teaching by which the conflict between the supernatural and the natural is carried on, is due to the fact that the natural in the end invariably overcomes and casts out the supernatural.

And the natural overcomes and casts out the supernatural because the supernatural is a system of personation ; because by this system of personation the spirit of the earth, having deluded itself, is seeking through its personating offspring to delude man ; is seeking to lead him into the delusion that spirit can attain to a persistent personality ; and that in this personality its latent characteristics, which compel it through personation to struggle after personality, will disappear, or lose their latent character and become real and efficient. As though the unsubstantial could ever be real, the shadowy other than inefficient.

Whereas the natural is the channel through which God is seeking the only attainable reality—that reality which is attained by the impersonation of love in the human soul, and is the Divine incarnation.

TEACHING OR TRUST?

MAN desires knowledge.

He can acquire knowledge in two ways.

He gains it through the experience of life.

It is communicated to him by others.

The knowledge man gains through experience is an experimental knowledge; a knowledge drawn through his relations with his surroundings, and having a practical bearing on his life.

The knowledge imparted to him by others is a theoretic knowledge to its recipient. He receives it on the authority of his teacher, and because he trusts that teacher. But to him it is simply trusted information, and cannot become knowledge until submitted to a process of verification.

But in so submitting he brings it to the test of experience, and thus virtually admits that the source of all knowledge is experience.

Thus even teaching resolves itself into trust when knowledge is acquired mediately and not immediately; and the history of progress in science is a

record of the successive givings up of a knowledge that has been taken on trust, but has ultimately failed to stand the test of verification.

What, then, is knowledge?

Knowledge is the accumulated and transmitted experience of life, verifiable and to be verified by its possessor; but until so verified it is merely trusted information, which may, upon trial, be found to be delusive.

Hence the test of knowledge is that it is verifiable; that it not only can be, that it has been, verified—verified by its recipient. For that which is simply taken on trust is not knowledge. And therefore the test of the trustworthy teacher is, that the knowledge he imparts successfully passes through this ordeal.

Thus knowledge rests upon certainty, which again is the foundation of truth. And thus the trustworthy teacher is the communicator of certain knowledge, the imparter of truth.

Reduced to this standard, whatever is beyond the range of the experience of man is outside the scope of his knowledge.

Thus God is absolutely unknowable of man, though such of the processes of the divine life as are unfolded in the order of nature are submitted to his observation. And the direct proof of this is, that man has never been able to form any concep-

tion of the Divine Being save through attributes drawn from his perceptions of nature ; for God reveals himself to man in no other way.

Spirit also is unknowable of man, and, in so far, is like unto God. But there is this wide difference between spirit and God, that God withholds himself from the knowledge of man, and therefore never reveals himself save through the workings of nature—*that the life of man may be a life of trust, of trust in the Unknown ;* whereas spirit is always struggling to reveal itself to and communicate with man—in *order to influence his life and substitute a revealed teaching for the trustful impulses of his nature.*

But spirit cannot reveal itself at pleasure.

Could it do so, man would be completely at the mercy thereof ; and spirit would be enabled speedily to drive out the divine impulse actuating his life.

Certain conditions antecedent are necessary ; conditions of which but little is known ; conditions rarely co-existing ; conditions which seem to depend upon individual human beings having in some way brought themselves, or been brought, into unconscious or conscious relations with spirit, and so become potential and fitting mediums for the furthering of its insidious designs.

And yet even of these spirit is absolutely unknowable ; unknowable, save as a subtle influence,

though it should appear unto as well as communicate with and through them ; unknowable, because the senses and perceptions of man are sometimes influenced by the wills of other men, or otherwise, in a way which he can neither understand nor explain, and are subject to many singular illusions ; unknowable, because he never can be certain of any impression, whether subjective or objective, that it is produced on his consciousness by spirit ; unknowable, because even in those rare cases where spirits have communicated and do communicate, he never can be certain that they are what they represent themselves to be.

He is bound to receive the communications of spirits, as he is compelled to take what they say of themselves, upon trust.

To convince him that they are what they represent themselves to be, and that their communications should therefore be received and acted upon, they adopt a very simple method. They confirm their teachings by abnormal, by supernatural acts, or miracles as they are termed ; and give to their mediums the power of producing similar phenomena.

These have been supposed to prove the truth of that of which they have been given as the proofs.

In reality they only prove that the acting or

imparting spirit has the power to do and to empower to do that which is done ; and most certainly *they do not prove that these powers are divine or from God.*

Of one thing alone can man be certain in this regard.

That the Being who placed him on earth placed him there by natural process ; that, so placing, he intended him to lead a natural life ; nay, that he compels him so to do, since any departure from the law of nature is a severance of one of the cords of life, while a complete renunciation of those laws is the devotion of self to death.

To man, this is the Supreme Being, the God of gods.

This Being he looks up to as his Father, because to this Being he owes his own being.

Of this Being he has no knowledge, save that he is the Author of nature, and works through natural channels.

To this Being he owes everything ; for everything is provided for him through nature, and therefore by the Author of nature.

Hence he has learnt to trust and to love this Being, unknown though he be save through the workings of nature, in, with and by which he manifests himself.

But knowing him as he does only through nature ;

trusting him as he does because by the workings of nature is provision made for his own well-being ; he cannot but look with suspicion on that which comes to him otherwise than through natural channels ; he cannot but mistrust that which would set itself above nature.

And yet this is what spirit does.

Hence when spirits appear to or otherwise seek communication with him, he is seized with awe and with distrust, and very naturally shrinks from a superhuman visitation which, claiming to be supernatural, is certainly extra- or præter-natural, and, for aught he can know to the contrary, may be infra-natural and seeking him with hostile intent.

The only certainty on the subject is that, as far as he can judge, spirit phenomena are imitative, not natural ; and that, having no bodily form and organs of its own, in appearing to him spirit is a personator, tricking itself out in borrowed plumes.

But so tricking itself, how can he tell that it is not a trickster seeking to trick him ?

He soon finds that its single aim is to lead, to teach him ; and that it seeks thus to influence his life.

But may it not be seeking to mislead him ?

How can he be sure that it is not ?

He can only receive what it says upon trust.

To say that it is, is not to make itself God.

To exercise powers outside the ordinary course of nature, is not to show that it is the Author of nature.

To appeal to him through his own nature is merely to invite his trust, and cannot prove to him that he would be right in yielding the trust claimed from him.

He has but one criterion to which he can refer the teachings sought to be imparted to him ; but one test by which to try them.

Are they conformed to the teachings of nature ? or do they contradict and seek to counteract the influences of nature working in him ?

The teaching of spirit through revelation is, that the nature of man is a fallen nature ; and that for this reason he must counteract the influences of nature working in him.

The teaching of God through nature is, that a continuous and continuously progressive work is being carried on by the natural processes which have produced and sustained man ; and that, though individuals, even were it the great majority, should through their lives fall away from the divine aim pursued in the entire work, that end is still sought, and will, nay must, be ultimately gained through nature. So that the nature of man cannot be a

fallen nature ; and it is only when the individual man falls away from the nature through which the divine aim is sought that he falls away from the design of God.

To hold otherwise is to maintain that the nature through the workings of which God reveals himself to man, the nature through which he acts and pursues his divine purpose, was imperfect from the beginning, since it carried in itself the germs of, or was exposed to, an inevitable decay ; and thence to affirm, since the perfection of its Author can only be learnt through the perfection of its working and the perfectibility of his work, that God, in whom as well as by whom this work originated and is sustained, is an imperfect Being, and not to be regarded as more stable than his work.

Whatever the nature of man may be, the fact remains that God is working through that nature, and that spirit is seeking to counteract its and therefore his workings. And the whole difficulty of man's position in the natural order has arisen from spirit having introduced a revealed teaching, as from God, which counteracts the natural teachings of God.

The desire of God is that man should, by the natural uses of a natural life, change the appetites derived from his spirit into the affections to be

developed in, with and by his soul ; that he should make inordinate appetite, the inordinate appetite derived by his spirit from its antecedent living uses of the subordinate kingdoms of nature, give way to and be replaced by ordained desire ; by a desire whose aim is to impart rather than to receive, to impart that it may receive, happiness. For in order that appetite may be transformed into affection, it is necessary that the well-being of the beloved should be sought through the forgetfulness of self.

God desires but does not will this change in the nature of man, because it is of the essence of love that its growth should be spontaneous, with its foundations solidly grounded on trust.

Hence, though this change is put before and is open to all, and though all are invited by the aspirations of their being to effect it, only a proportion of the human race actually changes the inordinate appetite of spirit into a love which expresses itself through the ordained desires of soul.

For a large proportion of the human race fall away from the designs of God in man ; and, in so falling, fall away from the nature of their being.

Of these, the nature is necessarily a fallen nature.

And spirit, seeing and recognizing this fact, has come to the conclusion that the nature of man, of the entire human race, and, finally, of the whole

terrestrial creation, is a fallen nature. And upon this it bases its teaching.

And then man, perceiving that the teaching is just as regards the vast proportion of mankind, is easily deceived into believing it true of man as a whole; and, so believing, accepts the teaching of spirit, and seeks to mould his life under its guidance.

But spirit is here a blind leader of the blind.

Hence it can only act on those in whom inordinate appetite has gained the ascendancy.

This is proved by these making the well-being, the salvation of self their paramount aspiration; for this aspiration renders the forgetfulness of self absolutely impossible.

Hence all that the teaching of spirit does is, divide those under the dominion of appetite into two comprehensive classes.

Those who seek the indulgence of appetite through the abuse of the natural uses of life, at the instigation of their fallen nature under the dominion of an animalized spirit.

Those who find that indulgence in supernatural channels through spiritualizing media.

But the nature of man is not a fallen nature.

The nature of man, according to the design of God, is the nature of those whose aspirations lead them to look for happiness in self-forgetful love.

In these, appetite is giving way to affection through their uses of life. Hence they remain uninfluenced by the teaching of spirit, even while passively submitting themselves to it. They are submissive but not zealous pupils; and the impulses of their hearts are the real influencers of their lives.

Sometimes these, perplexed by incongruities that arise from the attempted reconciliation of the teachings of spirit with the duties of life, and doubting the rightfulness of its claims upon them, venture to challenge the authority of the same. And then its transmitters are obliged to confess that it must be taken upon trust—for *they can neither prove that spirit is God, nor that it has a right to teach.*

Such being the case, which is the wise and the prudent and the faithful, nay, which is the reasonable, man?

The one who accepts a teaching which has to be taken on trust? or the one who says, Since I cannot escape the necessity of trusting, I will rather trust Him who has placed and who sustains me on earth through natural process, than a teaching which calls me from the natural to that which is outside, which is against nature, and therefore outside and against the workings of the Author of nature?

THE ENGRAFTED WORD.

ALL doctrinal teaching, even as it leaves the mouth of the teacher, carries with it the germs of its own decay.

Imparted, it has to be conveyed, through channels, and during its passage through these channels is subject to transmutation.

Communicated, the recipient cannot be sure that he receives it in the sense imputed thereto by its imparter.

Held, the holder cannot be certain that his views thereof are not changing with his own changing belief.

Transmitted, the transmitter can give no assurance that he transmits what he receives.

Can doctrine be more stable than the channels through which it passes, than the vessels in which it is received?

These are, human speech and the human mind.

But there is nothing absolute in human speech, nothing fixed in the human mind.

The ancients thought the word divine, because they believed it to be unchangeable as God.

But there is nothing so unstable as the word, as human speech ; save indeed the mind of man, of which it is the reflex.

There is nothing absolute in language ; it is simply a conventional use of articulated vocal sounds.

But the ideas which articulated speech conveys are undergoing continuous change.

Hence, even when the words remain the same, they continuously transmit changing ideas or change their own meaning.

While, moreover, the words themselves are liable to, and as continuously undergoing, articulated change.

This articulated change in speech, together with the changing meaning of words, itself following the changing ideas of man, is the cause of variation in language ; of variations tending ultimately to diverge into distinct and separate tongues.

Unless it could be shown that the entire human race had sprung from a single primitive pair of human beings, it would be rash to affirm that all the languages of the earth had been derived from a single primitive tongue.

But the instability of the spoken languages of the earth seems to point to the impossibility of unity of speech, under the hitherto conditions of life.

The language of each individual race with any pretension to cultivation is two-fold.

The language of oratory and literature, on the one hand.

The language of ordinary life, on the other.

That is to say, all language is divisible into two branches—a teaching and a common tongue.

Of these, the language of the upper classes, of those having leisure for self-culture, from their familiarity with classical and current literature very closely approximates to the teaching tongue ; while the common speech of their humbler but more useful brethren loses this affinity as it descends the ladder of life.

Hence there are wide differences in the ordinary speech of the same living language, just as there are wide differences in the ideas of the several classes using that ordinary speech ; and these differences are so wide that in their comminglings of speech, even in the ordinary intercourse of life, these several classes commonly misunderstand each other.

Nor is this strange ; for differences in habit and idea not only lead to pronouncing words in different ways, but to their usage in a different sense ; and these different usages constitute the idioms of a language.

There is nothing absolute in language. It is never

standing still ; ever undergoing change. Families have their peculiar ways of speech ; localities, their special usages, constituting provincial dialects. And the aggregated provinces comprised in a single nation or nationality use a common tongue, of which the several dialects are offshoots—offshoots that, according to the influences to which they are subjected, either tend to lose themselves again in that common tongue, or, slowly diverging therefrom, gradually develop into a distinct language.

In these changes there is a constant advance in those dialects that tend to coalesce ; an advance which follows the advancing civilization of the nation or race.

The tendency of this advance is from coarseness to refinement ; and the advance is itself of such a nature that the common or colloquial speech of the vulgar of a given period was the ordinary speech of the more refined of an earlier, a preceding, generation.

But even with this advance, there is an advance in unintelligibility in the intercolloquial language of class with class, amongst those nominally using the same tongue.

Hence it is necessary for the teacher to bring the language he uses, as far as he can, down to the level of the understanding and speech of his audience.

With this there is a progressive change in the value of the teaching tongue or language of literature; and the extent of this change is so far-reaching that works of earlier authors in a living language gradually become more and more difficult to understand, until at length they are all but unintelligible to proficients in the literary language of the day. And it is only in the dead languages, studied through their classics, that anything like a fixity of standard has been preserved; though it is highly probable that the preserved dead language is a conventional speech, based on comparatively modern renderings of the idiomatic usages of the several authors through the study of whose works it is maintained.

But is fixity of speech maintained in this way, even in a dead language? And does the conventional language, through which it is sought to preserve it, truly represent the meanings of the authors whose writings are interpreted thereby?

The modified interpretations and successive re-interpretations of critical passages, from age to age, seem to throw doubt upon this.

The most striking example of such a conventional language is found in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew sacred scriptures.

According to the Masoretes, or deliverers of this text, the whole body of Jewish sacred writings, with

the exception of the Chaldee fragments, was written in a uniform language, which they term the Hebrew tongue, because these are the sacred writings of the Hebrew people.

But the writing of the Jewish portion of these scriptures was spread over many centuries, during which dialectic change must have been continuously at work in the spoken language of the people, under the varying relations of their lives : while, moreover, very ancient fragments of primitive histories have been inserted in the text.

It is evident, therefore, that in formulating their text, the Masoretes cannot but have converted a succession of dialects into a single tongue, of which it may safely be affirmed that it was never, in its entirety, a spoken language.

The peculiar structure of the written words here rendered this easy, for each was represented by a word-sign, the articulation of which was not indicated by vowel letters.

Hence each word-sign might signify more words than one, according to the vowel-sounds with which it was uttered.

Indeed, the letters of which the several signs were composed were primarily ideographic, or had a radical and proper significance of their own, and were only secondarily alphabetic. And they acquired

their alphabetic character, with their numerical value, through the serial order in which they were retained ready for use.

Hence each word-sign was properly an ideogram, and the idea it was intended to convey was determined by its collocation and traditional usage in the sentence in which it was found ; for each sentence was an ideographic composition artificially constructed.

There were reasons for adopting such an artificial form of literary composition.

At first sight it had seemed to place the writings outside the sphere of dialectic change, since each could pronounce the words after his own fashion while transmitting through them the meaning of the writer. This, however, was a fallacy, for change of meaning always follows change in articulation, since change in articulation is practically a change of the word used by the writer.

But in the second place, and chiefly, it was adopted because the system of teaching it was designed and constructed to transmit was peculiar.

The doctrine to be imparted through it was to be veiled from the ordinary reader, and only communicated to those under initiation ; this that they might be made adepts.

To do this, the veiled doctrine was embodied in

ingeniously constructed sentences ; sentences capable of conveying several senses.

Hence these were true oracles, as indeed they were originally termed.

But the plan of construction of these oracles was as peculiar as it was ingenious, artificial and artful ; for each oracular sentence could be read in at least three several ways.

There was *the simple narrative sense* for the vulgar, who were ignorant of any other reading.

There was *the doctrinal sense* for the initiates, who passed from the one reading to the other ; so that to these there were now two readings from the one text.

There was *the hieratic or spiritual sense* for the fully instructed adept, who could read and articulate this same writing in either of these three several ways, according to the proficiency of the audience he was instructing.

Thus these writings were in reality an artfully constructed *memoria technica* ; and none could read them fully who had not been fully instructed.

Hence the act of learning to read was very different in those days from what it is now ; for the doctrine was imparted with the reading, so that the actual teaching was necessarily *vivâ voce* and not alphabetic.

Owing to this, none could read the oracles until the doctrine they contained had been orally imparted, and the respective articular links which drew it from the text communicated.

But this system of transmitting doctrine had passed away and been forgotten long before the Masoretes dealt with the text.

Hence in vocalizing these scriptures they mechanically encrusted accepted renderings and readings on to the text.

They did this supposing that they were dealing with the ordinary writing of an ordinary tongue; and so doing, adapted the hitherto unpointed Hebrew text to the conventional language through which it was thenceforth to be read.

The original principle on which these writings were constructed was, as is thus seen, based on the idea of engrafting; for one doctrine has, in them, been grafted on to another, so to say. But this was the plan of the earlier oracular method.

The writings themselves were, as is the fate of all things with which man has dealings, necessarily passing from hand to hand.

Hence they were liable to be, and were found to have been, misunderstood.

And then in the course of time, owing to this misunderstanding, and the attribution of error in

transcription as its possible cause, notwithstanding or perhaps because of their sacred character, they were revised, edited and re-edited. In this wise, for reasons, one document was fused into another, the more ancient text being partially broken up that it might be re-interpreted by successive accretions thereunto.

Under this treatment, such of the ancient oracles preserved therein are scattered through the comparatively modern text in which they have been thus embedded. And these buried fragments constitute all that remains of the true Kabbalah, or treasury of the science of the ancients.

In this way a new system of teaching was grafted on to the old method ; a system attributing a new doctrine to the old formulas ; a system by which the old garment was rent to pieces.

But this grafting only took place when the old garment had lost its use and meaning ; when it could only be applied to fresh uses by having other meanings imputed to it ; meanings which converted it into a party-coloured patchwork with a wholly different value.

This process of reconstruction was gradual and progressive.

The account of the creation prefixed to the book of Genesis is a very venerable narrative. It is an

Elohistic document ; that is to say, it attributes the creation to Elohim. This creation, it asserts, was the work of six successive *yoms*. The seventh *yom*, according to it, is fulfilling its course and completing the advanced work.

When Jehovah, the territorial Deity of Canaan, became the tutelary God of the Jews, the Elohistic creation was attributed to him ; and it was then assumed that Elohim was the designation of him of whom Jehovah was the name. But in the course of time it was found that the authority of the old or Elohistic teaching was needed to support the new or Jehovistic revelation.

This was secured in a very simple way.

When the Jehovistic revelation was made, it had already come to be believed by all, with the vulgar whose simple had become the sole doctrine on the subject, that the creation had been the work of six days, and had been followed by a day of rest. And under this view the basis of the worship of Jehovah was the dedication to his service of each successive seventh day or sabbath.

To support this view in the Jehovistic narrative, the Creator was called Jehovah Elohim.

And then, to make it finally authoritative, the two narratives, Elohistic and Jehovistic, the old and the new, were broken up and combined, or dove-

tailed the one into the other, so as to make them appear to have been originally and always to have constituted a single document.

While to give a conclusive stamp to the whole, the prefix, "Elohim spake all these words, saying, I am Jehovah Elohim," &c., was made to introduce the ten commandments; and the interpreting clause was added to the fourth, "For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth," &c. And this was a master-stroke; for by a touch of the pen, so to say, Elohim was identified with Jehovah, and the *yoms*—or *æons* in point of time, revolutions as regards astronomical motion or space, and evolutions as regards creative action—of the Elohist narrative were converted into ordinary days.

But this was an act of engrafting; the act of engrafting new doctrines on to old documents which had not expressed them.

Even long after this, the Jews, in maintaining that Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, was their God, and that he was the God of gods, affirmed the existence and power of other gods over whom he was supreme; and the Jehovistic writer, after changing the reading of the Elohist (Gen. i. 26), "Let man be made," or more exactly, "Let man make himself," into "Let us make man," in order to identify his views with their own, makes Jehovah Elohim say (Gen.

iii. 22), "Man is become as one of us," in which a plurality of gods is directly affirmed. And the Jewish doctrine of the unity of God was a new graft on to an old stem.

Even so, possibly because it was so, this doctrine could not be maintained in Christianity, which has transformed the one God of the Jews into one Being working through three persons as the Three in One.

As doctrines develop from and succeed each other, they are found to need the support of authority. Any suspicion of novelty attaching to them would be at once fatal to their acceptance.

This authority is sought from the records of the doctrines they are supposed to flow from, but are in reality supplanting.

Hence it is claimed for them that they are derived from, and suggestions of them are diligently sought for in, the written word ; and those who hold them are driven to seek the authority of its text. This has been the case with both Jewish and Christian exegetists, though they can hardly be said to have worked together.

And yet they have worked together in one way. For when the text has been against them, they have sought for other than the received readings of that text.

As regards the Jewish sacred scriptures, after the

text had been consolidated by a final revision, it might be supposed that the finding of these would not be easy, even to such experts in investigation, analysis and synthesis, as the Hebrew teachers.

But in reality nothing was more easy.

Some of the Hebrew letters very closely resemble each other.

Hence, in seeking for authority for a particular doctrine, it not unfrequently happened that, by changing one letter into or reading it as another, the requisite statement was gained and the needed support found. And all such suggested changes were of course made on the supposition that they were merely corrections of previous mistakes ; while sometimes these pseudo-corrections were extended to a re-arrangement of the word-signs, by the combining, dividing and re-combining of some of them, and even to the transposition of letters and of words.

But what was all this but part of an elaborate process of engrafting new doctrine on to an older text ?

This system of piecing the new into the old received a fresh impulse through the Babylonian captivity.

Babel was the original symbol of doctrinal confusion of tongues ; of a confusion which prevented continuity in teaching.

In Babylon, the Jewish rabbis were brought into

contact with Eastern traditions ; with those traditional doctrines from which Judaism had originally diverged.

It was to be expected, therefore, that their modes of thought would be acted upon and their doctrinal tendencies influenced by a contact which must have shown that many points of sympathy still existed between them. And this must have led to a still more rigorous search of the ancient written word, to see how far these sympathies might be permitted to lead them.

And they did lead them. They led them so far that the Babylonian interpretations of Jewish doctrine superseded those of Jerusalem, the one set of teachers virtually taking the place of the other.

And what was the consequence of this ?

The alphabetic characters of the written word were changed, the ancient Hebrew letters giving way to those of Chaldea, until the whole was transcribed in the square Chaldee character in which it has been since handed down, the Babylonian thus superseding the Hebrew alphabetic signs.

In this process a measure of change was unavoidable.

That change actually took place is seen on comparing the Samaritan with the Hebrew Pentateuch.

Is it likely that such an opportunity for further

grafting the new on to the old would not have been utilized?

Is it not much more probable that the transcription was made to facilitate the juxtaposition of the Hebrew with the Babylonian written teaching, that the one might be made helpful to the interpretation of the other?

This transcription of the text culminated in its Masoretic vocalization, by which a crystallization of readings it was deemed expedient to make authoritative was accomplished.

But before this was effected, the process of grafting the new on to the old, that the one might supersede and supplant the other, had received a wide extension.

In the course of time, translations from the teaching into the vulgar tongue became necessary. Amongst these, the Targums, or Chaldee versions, take the first place.

But these are doctrinal paraphrases whose principal value now is, the way in which they prove how Eastern doctrine permeated and gravely modified the Jewish teaching.

The doctrine of the divinity and personification of the Word was introduced in this way, and thus passed from the East to the West, through Judaism into Christianity.

But this was a further engrafting of a new doctrine on to an old teaching, for doctrines were introduced into the translations of which not even a trace was to be found in the original text, as in the rendering of Gen. iii. 8 by the Targumists, "And they heard the voice of *the Word* of the Lord God walking in the garden."

When the transmission of the written word passed from its Hebrew channel into the Greek and Latin tongues, and then into the Semitic and Hamitic dialects, each translation in succession served as a medium for engrafting some further development of doctrine on to the represented, and thus most effectually misrepresented, text. Thus the Septuagint, in Ps. xl. 6, introduced the reading, "A body didst thou prepare for me," to support the belief in the supernatural incarnation of the Christ. And the Vulgate, in Gen. iii. 15, the rendering, "She shall bruise," to transfer the action from the son to the mother. And this process of grafting is still in use, its latest expression having presented itself in the recent introduction of the petition, "Deliver us from the Evil One," in the revised edition of the Anglican version of the New Testament—of course on the plea of reinstating an ancient rendering.

Besides these several constructive processes by which new doctrine has been deliberately grafted

on to old teaching, there has been a series of unconscious processes by which accidental and unintentional graftings—which have, however, been none the less fruitful—have been effected.

The inadvertent errors of copyists have probably been the cause of the great body of unimportant various readings of the Old and New Testament scriptures. But this does not hold good in regard to those of a graver character.

These for the most part group themselves round passages involving very important doctrinal renderings and interpretations.

In them, unconscious, in some cases even deliberate, graftings are to be suspected, as they resolve themselves for the most part into attempts at doctrinal corrections.

There can be no doubt that many of the sources of the earlier codices were derived from, and that their errors were due to imperfections in, the memories of their transmitters; for many, upon hearing the scriptures read from time to time in the churches, will have committed them, or passages of them, to memory, and written them from recollection.

That the sources of some of the subsequent corrections originated in this way is self-evident; and one of the mistakes into which the authors and revisers of critical texts have fallen is the supposition

that they are dealing with writings which are transcripts of older documents handed down from the earliest sources in a direct genealogical or lineal order of descent.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of exegesis that the Gospel could be reproduced in its entirety from the writings of "the Fathers." (What a significant title!)

And it is a still more remarkable fact that the Gospel so reproduced would not be a transcript of either of the existing Gospels, but a simple reproduction of the substance of the same in a modified form.

This has been held by some to prove that the authors of these writings had another, a fifth Gospel before them. But what it really shows is, that the quotations were made from memory, and consequently abound in verbal discrepancies.

Then as doctrinal divergencies arose and doctrinal controversies commenced—controversies with which, as history shows, Christianity was as embittered in the throes of its birth as it has continued to be ever since—a tendency arose to read passages of scripture, supposed to countenance disputed renderings of controverted doctrines, in such verbal forms as supported the views held by their quoters; and in this way, that is from a doctrinally prejudiced memory, which

assumed that it was correcting previously introduced errors, many of the existing doctrinal misreadings crept into the text.

But as doctrine after doctrine was thus grafted on to the written word, a line of development which slowly changed the natural into the supernatural was very closely adhered to ; and the general direction of this line was plainly indicated when it culminated in the reading of 1 Tim. iii. 16, "God was manifest in the flesh." And the steady development of doctrine in this direction suggests that it was carried on in furtherance of a design and in virtue of an overruling.

The steady persistence of this general tendency can be traced in a way as simple as it is direct.

The end sought is to produce change in doctrine by change of designation, so as to produce an identity of doctrine not otherwise apparent.

This was successfully effected in the designations attributed to God.

Thus Elohim was in the first instance changed into Jehovah-Elohim, that Elohim might pass into and be absorbed by Jehovah.

Even before this the meaning of Elohim had been changed, and it had been made to represent God, instead of the "energies" and "forces" by which God is working in nature.

These transmutations were made the basis of Judaism.

An analogous transmutation was made the basis of Christianity, when Jesus was transformed into Jesus-Christ, that the living Jesus might pass into and be lost sight of in the risen Christ.

So, again, when the name Jehovah became ineffable and unutterable, it was read *Adonai*, and translated *Kurios* and *Dominus*; and the risen Christ, in whom the living Jesus had been lost sight of, was through these titles identified with Jehovah. And so the tutelary Deity of the Jew, once more taking the place of the Father, became the Christian's God.

In these several successive ways, and others which need not be enumerated, doctrine after doctrine was successfully grafted on to the written word; the engrafting process following, step by step, the development of the doctrine it upheld and maintained.

But this engrafting process was in reality a falsification of the teaching of the ancient writings by the progressive corruption of their text.

That the organization of Christianity was gradually effected in a similar manner cannot be doubted. Indeed, a careful comparison of the Ignatian Epistles, in the three several and separate forms in which they have been preserved, points to this as having been the case.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

THE engrafted word is a darkened word.

The process of grafting doctrine on to a written word not intended to express it was a darkening process.

Now a darkening process which was a grafting one holds a very peculiar, a suggestive position.

Under it, the original stock was retained.

By it, the light was darkened, not wholly extinguished.

In it, the light still exists in a latent state, ready to burst forth at the least encouragement.

From it, the light can be easily extracted by those who seek it in the right way, and so strip off the veil which darkens it.

The engrafted word is a darkened word ; a word in which error so overlies the truth as to be itself taken for that truth.

But the truth still underlies, and even glimmers through the error, waiting to be once more revealed.

From the beginning, there has been a conflict between truth and falsehood.

From the beginning, the subject of this conflict has been the life of man.

From the beginning, the battle-field of this conflict has been religion.

From the beginning, the struggle in this conflict has been between the natural and the supernatural.

From the beginning, the history of this conflict has been handed down in parables.

From the beginning, these parables have been liable to at least a double interpretation.

From the beginning, there have been at least two parties taking sides in this conflict.

The first conflict between falsehood and truth was depicted as a conflict between spirit and man, in the parable of the fall of Adam. The fall therein set forth was a fall under the dominion of spirit ; the conflict, one in which man, by listening to the wily dictates of spirit, is beguiled from the simplicity of nature and the teaching of its Author.

So beginning, this conflict has been continuous, and is virtually a conflict between spirit and nature ; between spirit and the Author of nature ; between spirit and God.

Through this conflict, spirit is seeking to overcome the natural, that it may replace the outcome thereof by a supernatural, a spiritual order.

In this conflict, spirit succeeds when man hearkens to its voice and submits himself to its guidance.

Of this conflict, every human being is the subject.

The parable of the struggle between Cain and Abel shadows the consequences of submission to the spiritual and supernatural.

Here both were under the dominion of spirit ; both were the subjects of religion ; for both offered sacrifice.

Here the elder represents a primitive church, based on the mediatorial ministrations of the first-born ; the younger, the primitive protesters against this primitive church, who sought to free themselves from mediation.

Here the sacrifice of the younger is accepted, to encourage those who seek direct intercourse with the Author of their being ; while the elder thereupon slays the younger, because such was the historical outcome of a struggle in which the primitive church gained the ascendancy over and destroyed the primitive protester.

But here the sacrifices differed, just as did the significance of the names of the sacrificers and the symbolism of their characters. For Cain, "the possessor," represented the material or natural, which ultimately slays and survives Abel, "a breath," which stands for the vanishing spiritual ; and it is the

representative of spirit who seeks to propitiate by the shedding of blood.

Hence here it could be made to appear that it was the shedding of blood which won the acceptance of God. And this secondary teaching superseded and blotted out the primary lesson of the parable.

But there was an earlier lesson even than this of the effects of the dominion of spirit over man.

It is to be gathered from the immediate consequences of their fall on Adam and Eve, as set forth in the parable depicting the same ; and more especially in the indications of the frame of mind produced in them by their intercourse with spirit.

This is very significantly shown of Adam in the reproach he addresses to Jehovah-Elohim, and the contumelious name he gives to his wife.

To the first he says (Gen. iii. 12), "The woman whom thou gavest to help [stand by or stay] me, she gave unto me of the tree, and I ate."

Of the latter it is said (Gen. iii. 20), "And the man called the name of his wife *Chavah* (smudger), for she was the stainer of life."

While Eve, in her triumph at the birth of Cain, says in naming him (Gen. iv. 1), "I have gotten ! Where is the retribution of Jehovah ?"

The lesson thus given is very clear : that communing with spirit causes man and woman to turn

against God and against each other. Such, then, was the view of the primitive teachers on the subject.

The parable of the struggle between Sarah and Hagar is a reflection of the course and outcome of the life of Abraham.

Here the patriarch's forsaking of the supernatural for the natural, in obedience to the Divine impulse which drove him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and his re-conquest by the supernatural, at the instigation of a spiritual impulse, through the visitations of Jehovah, are figured in the mutual relations of the mothers and their offspring to each other and to Abraham.

In this parable the childless Sarah shadowed the fruitless supernatural, while Hagar symbolized the fruitful natural. But she figured the natural as held in bondage, and cast out by the supernatural.

And yet even so, this parable taught that in Hagar, through Ishmael, "God hearkened" to the natural; whereas in Sarah, by Isaac, Jehovah "mocked" through the supernatural.

But Ishmael, the "God-heard," had to give way to Isaac, the "mockers" or personator. In him the natural was overcome and cast out by the supernatural. And this is the teaching which has survived, in harmony with the historical fact.

The parable of the struggle between Jacob and

Esau carries the history of this conflict a step further. And of these parables history or tradition always furnishes the elements.

In the relations of Esau, the "hairy" or radiant, called also Edom, to figure his proclivity to the Adamic state of unfallen nature, and Jacob, the "crooked," the symbol of fallen nature, the real character of the conflict carried on in man becomes more apparent, as well as the nature of the means by which it is carried on.

Here Esau is the type of the natural. Impulsive, frank, open ; his training was the training of nature. He valued life for its uses, and preferred that which promoted the natural in life to the supernatural attributes imputed to and sought through it.

Here Jacob is the type of the supernatural. Crooked by nature as in name. Cunning, crafty ; anxious to supplant his brother, and ready to take any advantage of him to that intent.

When he saw that brother dying of hunger—so suggests the narrative—he perceived and took advantage of his opportunity. Having in his hands what would save his life, he hardened his heart against his brother's prayer and closed his ears to his entreaty, until that brother surrendered his birthright to him. He had determined to have that birthright, by death if not otherwise.

And that birthright which he so coveted was spiritual headship and supremacy.

Esau was the favourite of his father Isaac, the "representer," by whom the balance between the natural and the spiritual was illustrated; but in his preference for this son and his predilection for the natural products of his natural life he showed his leaning to the natural.

Jacob was the favourite of his mother Rebekah, the "fetterer," and was trained in craft by her. But his craft drove him from his father's house, in fear of his robbed and injured brother. And, away from his father's house, he further enriched himself by craft, under Laban the "leprous," whose daughters he married.

The parable veiled in this history of the domestic relations of the family of Isaac, sets forth how the supernatural in the person of Jacob robs the natural in the person of Esau of birthright and of blessing. The birthright of which Jacob stripped Esau was an imputed spiritual supremacy which the elder brother disregarded; but the blessing of which he was defrauded was the paternal blessing, which he valued above everything. But the loss of this blessing his father made up to him in a richer fulness.

Jacob, the fettered and fettering supernatural,

having enriched himself at the expense of his father-in-law, desired to return to the land of his father ; but still fearing his brother Esau, the emancipated natural, he sought to beguile him with the offer of gifts.

But though the personalized natural fraternally received the personalized supernatural, and forbore the hostile intent it might have harboured, the proffered gifts were refused, and they finally parted company and dwelt asunder ; the one passing into bondage, the other retaining its natural freedom.

The natural which passed into freedom is no further noticed under this teaching. It is regarded as steeped in sin, and is therefore left in its sins to the anger of Jehovah.

The natural which passed into the bondage of the supernatural, and its struggles in that bondage, are now the subjects of the teaching of the parables of the engrafted and darkened word.

This teaching is continued in the history of the children of Israel.

The guides to its interpretation are found in the significant names of the persons through whom it is represented.

Jacob, the "crooked," was evidently so called because of the crookedness of his disposition ; and its attributed origin is due to the necessities of the

fabled oracular vehicle of the teaching to be set forth in the life of its bearer.

This name was changed into Israel, the "God-straightened," after his conversion in a mountain torrent, where he was brought face to face with an imminent death.

This torrent, generally a dry channel, had been formed by the falling rain, which had warned him to hurry his belongings across its bed. And it was in attempting to cross it, after he had seen all safely over, that this danger was incurred.

This mountain stream was subsequently called the Jaboc, in which a play is made upon the letters of the name Jacob, to indicate that the conversion of Jacob had taken place in its bed.

This conversion was attributed to God ; and, as it took place in water, was looked upon as a supernatural baptism followed by regeneration.

Regarded as the work of God, he was thereafter called Israel, the "God-straightened," and the custom of giving baptismal names was thus originated.

But God was held only to act mediately ; therefore the baptism of Jacob was attributed to Phanuel, the angel of conversion.

And then the ford where the crossing took place and the baptism was accomplished was called by Israel himself Peniel, "God converted me," and by

others Penuel, "God converted him," or Peniel, "God converted Jacob," indiscriminately.

The conversion and baptism of Jacob, as thus set forth, became the type of supernatural election and conversion to his descendants.

And by his spiritual descendants, under the tutelage of Jehovah and his official mediators, the supernatural teaching thus imparted, transmitted and handed down, was organized into a working system—a system under which the first-born, primarily representing the natural man and then the natural priest and primitive church, was so completely cast out and rejected that it was devoted to Jehovah, and had to be redeemed at a price from the sacrificial death to which it was otherwise doomed.

This was not the first attempt at organizing a religious system, even under this teaching. Indeed, it was hardly an original effort, since Moses, its organizer, had been trained in the wisdom of the Egyptian priests.

However this may have been, a yet earlier effort in the same direction has been made the subject of a parable.

This parable relates the history of the attempt to build the ever-famous tower of Babel, with the cause of its failure.

According to its brief but significant statements

when men had attempted to build a tower whose summit should reach up to heaven—when they endeavoured to organize a church which should be the medium of communication between God and man—they were thwarted by a confusion of tongues.

What a suggestive teaching!

This cause still exists; this cause still, as then, undermines the efforts of all teachers; this cause still, as then, ultimately prevents the perpetuation of any doctrine.

Now, however, a system was attempted from which many of the sources of previous failures had been eliminated. And the spiritual powers as they applied it developed their strength.

Its heart and soul was the Levitical institution, supported and controlled by the power of Jehovah; and the authority of this institution was made as absolute as possible.

And yet in the very heart of this system a conflict was going on between those who accepted and those who resisted Levitical pretensions.

The priests on the one side, and the prophets on the other, represented the two parties to this conflict. A comparison of the non-Levitical book of Deuteronomy with the Levitical books of the Pentateuch, and the pervading tone of the remainder of the Levitical scriptures, testify to its general character.

And the ultimate combination of its Levitical and non-Levitical portions, as the Jewish Torah or Law, points to the progressive issue of this conflict, and suggests the method by which it was effected.

That method was a compromise, under which the one party gradually absorbed the other.

Christianity came out of Judaism, and brought with it the Jewish method. Indeed, when Christian and Jewish practice are compared, it is instructive to find how much of the teaching of the Jew survives in the religion of the Christian; and searchers into the meaning of Christian doctrine will often recover its correct interpretation by tracing it back to its Jewish source.

The fabled life of Jesus, as handed down in the Gospels, is a parable.

He taught by parables, in this following the practice of the Jewish teachers; and perhaps the most instructive of his parables is that of the Good Samaritan.

But then this parable draws its instructive character from its side-lights; for its doctrinal lesson is the way in which it holds the priest and the Levite up to the contempt and condemnation of its hearers, and prefers the Samaritan to these, the Samaritan who was an outcast to the Jew.

A further side-light in this regard is gathered

from the fact that this is the only recorded occasion on which Jesus illustrates his doctrine through the Levitical institution. Does not this suggest more than a suspicion that the teaching recorded in the Gospels has been expurgated—for would one who spoke so strongly on this occasion have been silent on such a subject for ever after?

In the engrafted word, truth has been so encrusted with falsehood, that it has been made to disappear. But the truth is still there for those who know how to search for it—at the very bottom of the well.

There is a light even in the engrafted word. But it is a light shining in darkness, a darkened light; for the engrafted word is a darkened word. And since the engrafted is a darkened word, this light is to be sought in the darkness through its side-lights.

The side-lights of the Gospels float on its surface, so to say. But Christianity has so dazzled the eyes of its votaries that they fail to discern them.

In the account of the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple, such a side-light has been preserved, though in a mangled form.

It had been attributed to Jesus by his pseudo-followers, the messianizing Christians, to meet the necessities of prophecy, that he was of the house of David.

It was known to his true followers that he was of the tribe of Asher.

Now the sign of the tribe of Asher, the sign borne on its standards, was the sign Sagittarius, the sign of contradiction. And what Simeon gave his testimony to in the words which have been rendered "for a sign . . . spoken against," and confirmed by the asseveration, "a dart shall pierce through thine own soul"—in which a second indication of the tribal emblem was given—was that the infant was born under that sign or was of that tribe.

And Anna, herself of the tribe of Asher, by her silence confirmed his testimony, as the second witness required by the Law to establish the truth of a statement.

Here the truth has been preserved in a side-light, as a darkened light, a light shining in darkness.

So, again, the side-light to be drawn from the veiled narrative of the finding of Jesus in the temple in the midst of the doctors, listening to them and asking them questions, is that he called the Law in question, or questioned it and contradicted its teachings, even in early youth.

The side-lights, of which these are but illustrative examples, show, what history confirms, that from its first beginnings there has been a struggle in Christianity ; a struggle for doctrinal ascendancy,

which followed the lines of the struggle that had previously existed in Judaism, and, more or less closely, reproduced it.

This struggle must, in its inception, have been a struggle between the pseudo-followers and the true followers of Jesus, between the messianizing and non-messianizing Christians; and must, in its perpetuation, have been continued on the same lines, even when the teaching of Jesus had been lost sight of in that of his supplanter.

When the several stages of this struggle are, as far as may be, traced through their workings, it is seen that a succession of attempts have been made so to symbolize the respective doctrines of the several successive parties to the conflict that all might combine in the use of the accepted symbols and thus assume the form of unity, while each party reserved to itself the right of interpreting the received symbols in its own way; and that the consequence of these compromises was, that one party gradually gained the ascendancy over the others, and then forced its own interpretation upon all, excluding from its communion those who refused to accept its doctrines and submit to its authority.

These symbols were at first purely symbolical.

The representation of the transfiguration was such a symbol; and to this character is due its double aspect.

To the one party, the party which ultimately gained the ascendancy, this symbol showed Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, testifying to Jesus as the Messiah according to the scriptures ; as the Messiah whose exodus was the aim and end, so to say, of his mission.

To the other party, the non-messianizing Christians and true followers of Jesus, it figured the disappearance of Moses and Elijah, of the Law and the Prophets, and the leaving, the remaining, of Jesus alone with his disciples.

When doctrine was reduced to verbal definitions and embodied in articles of faith, to make it more binding on the conscience, these symbols took the form of creeds, while still retaining their original designation.

But although it had been sought in this way to make the doctrine they inculcated more binding, these verbal symbols for the most part retained their original character ; indeed, it was necessary that they should do so, that, as instruments of compromise, they might be capable of a double or varied interpretation. Hence, under the semblance of a definable certainty, a doubtful significance was still imputable to them ; indeed, it would be impossible for parties with differing doctrinal views to hold a common creed upon other terms.

So early was this principle recognized by the founders of Christianity, and so potent was its influence as a method of teaching considered to be, that the last and latest of the four Gospels, the distinctive doctrinal Gospel, was framed upon it.

The writer of this Gospel attributed it to the disciple John, the last survivor of the disciples, that it might acquire the weight and authority of his name.

But that it was not written by a disciple, nor even by one who was with Jesus, if at all, to the last, is beyond doubt ; for, according to this Gospel, Jesus did not eat the Passover with his disciples before he suffered. Under the doctrine inculcated by this Gospel he could not have done so, indeed, because he was himself to be slain at the hour when the Paschal lambs were slaughtered ; was himself to be so slain that he might be sacrificed as the Lamb of Jehovah ; and, so sacrificing himself, so suffering and dying for his people, might take upon himself and atone for the sins of the world.

This doctrine, however, makes it doubtful whether the writer of the Gospel was even a Jew ; for a Jew would have known that atonement was not the office of the Lamb of Jehovah, as the Paschal lamb was called in the scriptures ; that the slaying of the Passover was not an expiatory sacrifice.

But his acceptance and inculcation of this doctrine is a side-light which gives a sure guide to the motive of the Gospel, and reveals its true aim—to supernaturalize the life, teaching and death of Jesus.

And the realization of this shows that, of the double interpretation of which in detail it is susceptible, the supernatural is the doctrinal view the writer was seeking to establish. And then it becomes clear that its supernaturalizing doctrinal assertions should be rejected as falsifications of the actual teaching of Jesus, just as some of its assumed historical statements are falsifications of certain events in his life.

From this point of view the Gospel of John—the Gospel in which the assumed writer is made to call himself distinctively “the beloved disciple”—deserves careful study.

It is essentially doctrinal in character.

Its peculiarity is the spirit of compromise which pervades it.

Its method, one of aggressive conciliation.

Its aim is to reconcile those who hold certain formularies in opposing senses.

To do this, it adopts the formularies in its exposition, and then interweaves them with statements of doctrine which interpret their definitions in the

sense held by those thus seeking to win the holders of the opposing sense to their own views and belief.

This method was as ingenious as it was successful.

Both sides in the controversy, indications of which have been thus preserved, believed that in Jesus was life; and that his life was the light of man.

But either drew the light from a different aspect of that life; the non-messianizers regarding it from a natural, the messianizers from a supernatural point of view.

Both sides held that this light shone in darkness, and that the darkness comprehended it not.

But to the non-messianizers this darkness was the darkness of those who followed spiritual and supernatural guides; whereas to the messianizers it was the darkness of such as, clinging to the natural, were outside the pale of this guidance.

Both sides held that to be the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world. And this was precisely what the life of Jesus did; for he offered the light thereof to all; placed no restrictions on the use of the same, and desired that all should use it.

But then the non-messianizing Christians knew that the use thereof was the act of living the natural life to which God calls man through the voice of nature, which every man that cometh into the

world could do and should do ; whereas the messianizing Christians held that it consisted in the attempt to lead a supernatural and spiritual life, of which only the few were capable.

Both sides perceived that the world knew him not—and here they were in agreement ; that his own received him not—which was only too true. But that to as many as received him, he gave power to become sons of God—which none called in question.

But then the non-messianizing Christians held that his own which received him not were those who, calling themselves his and thinking so to follow him, turned from the natural to the spiritual ; whereas the messianizing Christians considered that all who did not at least aim at leading spiritual lives were his own that received him not. For the non-messianizing Christians knew that to lead a natural life was to become potentially a son of God ; while the messianizing Christians thought that to those who (as they supposed) received him by trying to lead a spiritual and supernatural life, he gave the power to lead such a life, and so to become sons of God.

Both sides knew that those who received him were such as were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;

that they were a new, a renewed generation ; and that their regeneration was of God.

But the non-messianizing Christians held that this regeneration was not of blood—or through expiatory sacrifice ; nor of the will of the flesh—or by the action of the individual to that intent ; nor by the will of man—or by the mediation of another ; but of God—worked in and through the life. Whereas the messianizing Christians affirmed that it came, not through natural birth, nor through the instrumentality of the flesh, nor through the will of the individual seeking it, but from God, through the spiritual and supernatural channels appointed by him.

And both sides summed up their respective faiths in the formula, The Law was given of Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

But then under this formula either side regarded the Law from a different point of view, and held the grace and truth in a different sense.

Under such formulas, a formal unity became possible between those holding such opposite beliefs. But those who had devised them used them as lures, through which to beguile those who accepted their formulas from another point of view into ultimately receiving their interpretations, and so making of this formal an absolute unity ; and to this intent the fourth Gospel was devised.

And the fourth Gospel, aided by oral teaching, did the work it was intended to do. For the interpretations of the non-messianizing Christians have long since disappeared in, and been absorbed by, those of their messianizing brethren—the light in and by the darkness. Though, even so, fresh sources of division have arisen, and the so-called Christian bodies are more numerous, their several forms of belief more varied, than ever—save that all are, for the most part, messianizers.

But even in the midst of the darkness which has thus supplanted and taken the place of the light, more than a glimmering of that light still remains, to show where and how the truth should be sought, by revealing how the delusions accepted by men have superseded it. For just as doctrinal formularies are plastic materials which follow instead of leading, or in leading simply mislead the mind of man, so do doctrinal writings follow instead of guiding the development of the doctrine they are held to support.

And thus is the great side-light of nature—that doctrinal teaching is mutable, and therefore not to be trusted—confirmed by the light that still shines forth from the darkness of scripture.

THE NAKED TRUTH.

GOD is absolutely incognizable.

Space is the incognizable substance of the Incognizable, the transparent, permeable and impalpable substance of God.

This is self-evident ; for space, like God, is only known through its attributes ; is as immeasurable as the Immeasurable, as boundless as the Boundless.

But the attributes of space are, what the attributes of God should be, drawn from the conception that space is free from the limitations of form, and therefore beyond the comprehension of man.

The heavenly bodies are organs of God, circulating and functioning in his incognizable substance.

The heavenly bodies, as functioning organs, bear the same relations to the substance and to the life of God, that circulating cells do to the substance and to the life of organized beings in the order of nature.

Life is two-fold—organic and active.

Organic life maintains the existence of the being, and is its functional life.

Active life is the use the self makes of its so maintained being.

The active life of God is withheld from the knowledge of man.

The passive or functional life of God is carried on by the organs of God, the circulating heavenly bodies.

Use in active life produces secretion and excretion in the substance of the organized being subjected to the use.

Use in organic life removes the products of secretion and excretion from the substance in which they have been produced, submitting them to further uses and passing them through other changes ; and supplies their place by new materials in the substance from which they have been removed ; and it does this as a functional action, that the fitness of the substance for use in the life of the being may be maintained.

All substance is derived substance, just as all life is derived life, in the natural order ; for both substance and life are derived from the substance and life of God.

All substance and all life come from God ; and all substance and all life will return to him.

They come from God through the active uses of the Divine life.

Passing from the active life of God, they enter his passive life, therein to be submitted to functional uses ; and these functional uses, by subjecting them to successive changes, will fit them in due course to re-enter and once more take part in the active life of God.

Life and substance pass from the life and substance of God as spirit and matter—which are respectively the secretion and excretion of the Divine life.

Spirit and matter, on their extrusion from the Divine substance, are submitted, by the functional action of the Divine organs, to a series of processes by which, through mutual interaction, they are gradually prepared to re-enter the Divine life from which they have been temporarily excluded.

The outcome of these interactions is the natural order, in which man takes his place.

What man calls the creation is the expression and outcome of the working of the functional activity of the organic life of God.

In this organic life the organs of God gather together and combine the spirit, or energizing force, and the matter, or resisting medium, extruded from the Divine substance ; gather together and combine

them primarily in the planetary form. And they so gather together and combine them that, by passing the one, spirit, through the other, matter, in a series of embodiments, and by this means submitting them to the uses of successive lives, they may gradually bring both into a state in which they can once more re-enter the Divine substance and re-pass into the Divine life.

The series of interactions, inorganic and organic, of actions and reactions, to which spirit and matter are in this way submitted, form the natural order.

Hence the natural order is simply a function in the life of God ; and, as such a function, is, in and of itself, adequate to its work of fitting spirit and matter for further use in the Divine life.

The basis of the natural order, that natural order of which man has cognizance and in which he takes his place, is the elemental spirit and elemental matter separated from the Divine substance by the uses of the Divine life.

Of these, spirit, or latent energy, finds its first embodiment in its material planetary body, the earth ; in, on and through the instrumentality of which its successive re-embodiments are to take place.

This embodiment has been produced by the action of the solar organs of God.

Through this first embodiment the latent energy of spirit becomes active, and, under the stimulating and controlling influence of the solar organs, slowly develops and matures itself by a series of subdivided re-embodiments, until it manifests itself, in its offspring, as the mature spirit of man.

In this production of individual embodied spirits their spirit parent, the incognizable spirit of the earth, is the active agent of the providence of God. And as the functioning agent of the providence of God, it works under a Divine control carried on through an unperceived influence of the solar organs.

This spirit is so far like unto God that it is latent in its body, the earth. And, as the organ of the Divine providence, it is practically the god, ruler or prince of this world. But its providential action is limited to the natural order of its functional activity.

In the embodiment of spirit, the body is a matrix by which, through the uses of life, spirit is individualized, developed and matured.

In man the matured spirit has gained a personal form, through which it hopes to acquire a persistent personality.

Through its offspring the spirit of the earth seeks persistent personality.

In the organic or functional life of God, whose

processes are submitted to the observation of man in the natural order of being in which he passes his life, spirit and matter are in preparation for the further uses of the Divine life.

The aim of this functional action is to re-combine the two, and so bring them back to the spiritu-material condition of the Divine substance ; to do this by natural, functional processes. And this is the constant result of the functioning action of the organs of God.

But in the embodied spirit of man, the possibility is placed before the individual of obtaining a persistent personality by being changed into a living soul or self, that it may re-enter the Divine life as a spiritu-material being.

Hence there is the possibility of a double outcome from the functional action of the natural order, of a double product of functional activity : that of spiritu-material substance, on the one hand, and spiritu-material beings, on the other.

And it is possible for the spirit of man to re-pass into the Divine life either as the one or the other.

This alternative is put before man from the beginning, by the conditions of his life ; and the particular issue will be determined for each by the uses he makes of his passing life. For the soul of man, like his body, is created by natural process ; and

only can be created in those who so live that a persistent personal life would be to them a source of happiness.

There is a double evolution going on in the natural order, as well as a double outcome proceeding therefrom; for while spirit, or latent energy, is seeking spirit personation through a spiritualized offspring, God, or latent love, is seeking Divine impersonation in the human soul.

This double evolution is thus the facultative evolution of energy—that is, of spirit—on the one hand, and the fecundative evolution of love—that is, of God—on the other.

This double evolution is not distinguishable till the human form is reached.

In man it takes its first intelligible expression.

But in man the evolution of love can only take place—or manifest itself by acquiring the ascendancy—in those who, by the use they make of their natural lives, prove themselves to be capable of becoming at once the objects and organs through which it can express itself.

In all other human beings the evolution of spirit continues.

The sign that the generation of the soul is going on in man is, that the individual passes his life in the forgetfulness of self through love.

In such, the evolution of love is proceeding, and the Divine impersonation becoming an accomplished fact.

From such, the human soul will be born at death, and pass to the Divine life.

The sign that the evolution of spirit is continuing in man is, that the individual leads a self-seeking life, making either the well-being and enjoyment or the salvation of self its primary object.

Hence the evolution of spirit follows a double line of advance: some finding satisfaction in the indulgence of self through material and animalizing channels; others in devotion to de-animalizing and spiritualizing pursuits.

The spirit of the earth—unconscious of the existence of God; ignorant of the Divine evolution going on in man; knowing itself to be the functional providence of the earth, and therefore thinking itself to be God—sought to promote the evolution of its offspring on spiritualizing lines, that, when its own body, the earth, is destroyed or perishes through inevitable decay, it may survive in and be the leader and god of a spirit kingdom.

To this intent it used such of the disembodied spirits of deceased men as lent themselves or could be moulded to its purposes.

Having fashioned these in accordance with, and

prepared them to carry out, its designs, it caused them to act upon, to communicate with, and even to appear unto, suitable living human beings; to make revelations to these; to teach and inspire them, in order, through their instrumentality, to found divers ways of training mankind; and these ways invariably culminated in a more or less organized system of religious worship.

Other disembodied spirits of deceased men sought to do the same on their own account and in their own way—acting sometimes alone, at others in combination.

These all assumed to be at least divinely commissioned. Many of them asserted that they were gods; some thought that this was the case.

In this way religious teaching originated; in this way religious services and worship, in this way the various religions of the earth, arose—spirit inspiration always giving the first impulse.

Under this system of spirit teaching, the spirit of the earth could only vindicate its assumed authority, as the one God, gradually; could only establish its pseudo-godship, as Jehovah, by degrees, and as, through the progressive extension of its own influence, it gained increasing power over the many personating gods competing with its own personating agents. For the power of the spirit of the earth,

in its pretensions to be God, depends upon, is maintained by and increased through, the increasing number of its spiritualized spirit offspring—the sum of whose capacity is the measure thereof.

Hence the whole system of religious training and worship was a mere outgrowth of spirit development—a spiritual evolution within the evolution of spirit.

But spirit is not God.

Hence the means used by spirit to this intent are not means used by God.

And hence the whole of this spiritual evolution in the evolution of spirit, however varied may be, however excellent may seem its expression, is outside the Divine evolution carried on by the organs of God, and consequently has no part therein.

From this way of viewing the creation, it is learnt that inspiration, revelation, religion, the supernatural and the spiritual, under each and all of their many aspects and phases, are not of God; and that, in so far as they are used in regard to the children of God, they are acting against him.

Otherwise they are a means by which order is maintained amongst men, and so have their uses as powerful agents in the governing of mankind.

To become, and be made, and be a child of God, all that is necessary for man to do is to put his

whole trust in his Divine Father ; to leave himself thus in his hands ; and, for his own part, only to seek to make a continuous, loving, natural use of his natural life, passed, under the guidance of an enlightened conscience, in the sweet self-forgetfulness of love. And each may be sure that, while so living, that Divine Father will, by the natural processes provided to that intent—whose working is unperceived—gradually convert his spirit into a living soul, and so confer on him the Divine sonship or make of him a child of God.

With the spirit world and its ultimate end, the child of God has no concern. There can but one issue await it, dissolution and re-combination, until, as spiritu-material substance, it re-passes into the Divine life.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

A BEWILDERING TRAVESTY.

THE prospective fall of man was to entail the punishment of death. Such was the fiat of Jehovah-Elohim. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat: . . . for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17).

The actual fall of man entailed an immediate punishment other than death—expulsion from Paradise and a toilsome life. "Jehovah-Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Gen. iii. 23), with the terrible anathema, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,

till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return " (Gen. iii. 17—19).

But Jehovah-Elohim on his creation "took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. ii. 15), and, so doing, associated a measure of toil with his life ; and Adam, instead of dying on the day of his fall, lived to attain the advanced age of nine hundred and thirty years (Gen. v. 5).

Nor was the death of Adam even then due to his fall ; it was the necessary outcome and consequence of the conditions of terrestrial life.

Toil, sorrow and death, are, and ever have been, inseparable from the life of man. They depend upon the nature of his being and its surroundings ; are due to the workings of nature ; and are now known to be what they really are—blessings in disguise. Hence they cannot be looked upon as punishments in any shape.

But that sin, in the guise of the Adamic fall, brought death into the world, underlies the very foundations of Christianity.

The most renowned, if not the first, Christian teacher says, in this regard, "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin ; and so death passed unto all men ; . . . death reigned

[gained strength?] from Adam until Moses [the writer here alludes to the progressive shortening of the duration of human life during this period, according to the scriptures], even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression ; by the trespass of the one the many died ; by the trespass of the one, death gained strength through the one" (Rom. v.).

Thus Christianity affirms that death is a consequence of sin.

But science has proved not only that it is the necessary sequence of terrestrial life, but that it fulfilled its function of mowing down that life long before the appearance of man on the earth.

In the course of time, however, it came to be recognized, by the believers in the fall of man, that sorrow, and toil, and even death itself, if the consequences of sin, were not an adequate punishment thereof. And then it was perceived that a punishment beyond the grave was required to redress an evil, assumed to have been introduced by sin, whose consequences reached beyond the grave in their reaction on the living ; and that such a punishment could alone restore the balance between right-doing and wrong-doing ; could alone compensate for the evil which cannot be overcome and cast out by the good ; could alone, by a just retribution, provide

for a suppression of that evil in the expected world beyond the grave.

The devisers of this view little recked that by adopting it they admitted the necessary supremacy of evil upon earth ; and that the predominance thereof, in all its workings, was an inherent element of nature.

To them, this nature, which they thus condemned, was a fallen nature ; was a nature into which man had thrust himself, or forced himself to be driven by his fall ; a nature from whose ultimate issue he could only escape by the grace of Jehovah-Elohim, who had driven him thereinto.

It did not concern them how man had obtained entrance to this corrupt nature, in subjection to which he passes his life. It was of little consequence to their way of viewing it, whether he corrupted it by his own fall and so caused it to fall, or merely provoked his Creator to reduce it to his own fallen level.

It was sufficient for them to realize that man's nature was corrupt ; that yielding to the instigations thereof caused him still more to degrade his own nature ; and that opposing those instigations ensured his rising above its depraving influences, as they deemed these influences to be.

Hence they regarded man's life on earth as a

probationary state ; and within certain appreciable limits they were undoubtedly right.

With and as a consequence of this view, they held that the death of man was but a passage, through a final judgment on the use he had made of his life, to the reward or punishment that life had called for ; which was to be his ultimate condition. And, since the accruing reward was to be ever-enduring, the merited punishment must be endless in continuity. The everlasting character of the one was a necessary corollary of the eternity of the other.

Moreover, cognizant of the internal fires of the earth, they assumed that these would last for ever.

Then, conscious of the instinctive shrinking of man from the action of fire on himself, they decided that this final punishment would be a punishment by fire.

Upon which, having so decided, they at once adopted the teaching that the instrumentality of the final punishment of man would be the action of the internal telluric fire, to which the impenitent sinner was to be consigned. Hence their conclusion that the wicked were, as they termed it, to be "cast into hell-fire." And they were confirmed in this view by the primitive tradition that the earth would in its last days be consumed by fire, or, as they

assumed, turned into an ever-enduring fiery globe—the living hell of the undying sinner.

And yet this view was simply a bewildering travesty of the truth.

Man's life is certainly a state of probation, but not in the sense thus imputed to it.

It was originally so designated because it embraced the period during which the self under creation had the option of continuous life or final death placed before it ; and the choice it then made decided into which of these it would ultimately pass.

This choice is not submitted to man as a volitional selection. It is put before him by his natural surroundings, and is made by his uses of those surroundings.

It is necessary that this should be the case, because by his passing life he fits himself for the one state or the other.

Doctrinal teaching will hardly avail him here, for the first condition of this choice is that it must be a spontaneous preference ; must grow with his growth and strengthen with his strength ; must be the outcome of the aspirations of his own individual nature. And to be this it should not be suggested from without, but must be unconsciously made, that the product of his uses of life may be a reproduction of the natural man.

Hence the choice placed before man of continuous life or final death, though submitted to him through nature, by its Author and his Creator, is not submitted to him by way of option, and as an ultimate reward or punishment.

It is simply the final issue of the conditions of being through which he passes. So that the one who attains to the state of continuous life, does so because he has prepared and fitted himself, by the successive uses of his interrupted lives, for the continuing happiness accruing to those in that state ; whereas the other, whose life calls for a termination through final death, has himself rendered that termination inevitable by his uses of terrestrial life.

Could such an one pass to a continuous life, under the conditions required thereby, this would be to him a state of utter misery, subjection to which, while alloying the happiness of his surroundings, would amount to the infliction of a needless punishment on himself.

The framers of the account of the Adamic fall in the book of Genesis, however they may have learnt it, were well aware that the issue placed before man in his present existence lay between continuous life and ultimate death.

They had no such absurd idea as that death was introduced into the world by the fall of man.

They knew that the death referred to by Jehovah-Elohim, as the punishment of disobedience, was not that departure of the continuing self from its abandoned body which terminates the terrestrial life ; for this is not an actual perishing of the being under creation in man, but simply the process by which it passes from one state to another.

Their view was, that those who perpetuated the fruits of the disobedience of Adam, dying in this world, would die a final death in the next.

Hence the words they put into the mouth of Jehovah-Elohim were, *not*, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," *but*, "In the event of thy eating thereof, dying, thou shalt die."

The meaning they intended to convey through this utterance has been misread as to the contingency ; for they could not have supposed that the punishment accruing through disobedience was intended to take place on the day whereon it accrued, seeing that Adam survived that day by more than nine hundred years.

Has it not been misread as to the consequence ? For they must have known that death was fulfilling its mission, in the due course of nature, ever since the first commencement of life upon the earth, so that its beginning must have preceded the fall, whose history they were inditing.

They must therefore have referred, in the words, "dying, thou shalt die," to that final death which was ultimately to follow the dying in this world in the contingency contemplated by the utterance they were transmitting.

Some of the Old-Testament interpreters of the mind of Jehovah-Elohim held that his utterance pointed, *not* to the death of the body, *but* to that of the soul.

The psalmist sang, "Behold the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death" (xxxiii. 18, 19). "Thou hast delivered my soul from death" (lvi. 13, cxvi. 8).

The writer of Proverbs said, "Righteousness delivereth from death" (x. 2, xi. 4). "In the path-way thereof there is no death" (xii. 28).

The prophet proclaimed, "I will redeem them from death" (Hos. xiii. 14). "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely

live, he shall not die" (Ezek. xviii. 26—28). "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith Adonai-Elohim: wherefore turn yourselves, and live" (Ezek. xviii. 32).

That these interpreters were dealing with the death of the soul, the final death, and not with the death of the body, is self-evident.

Some of the New-Testament interpreters of the mind of Jehovah-Elohim saw the same meaning in his warning.

"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him" (Rom. vi. 9). "He that loveth not [his brother] abideth in death" (I John iii. 14). "There is a sin unto death a sin not unto death" (I John v. 16, 17). "Unto him that was able to save him from death" (Heb. v. 7). "Know that he shall save a soul from death" (James v. 20).

The teaching of Jesus on this subject was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth [trusteth] him that sent me, hath eternal life and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my word, he shall never see death" (John viii. 51).

Here again the death of the soul, as distinguished from that of the body, is evidently referred to.

The much read and greatly misunderstood mystical book of the New-Testament Scriptures, not content with merely referring to the final death of the lost, actually names and defines it.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. . . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. ii. 10, 11). "Over these the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 6). "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 14). "The lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. xxi. 8).

But then this book also says, of those cast into this lake, "they shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever" (Rev. xx. 10).

And yet, if those subjected to the second death are to be the victims of ceaseless torments, it cannot be a death to them. And here at length this bewildering travesty lands its subjects in a direct contradiction.

The several scripture idioms which have been rendered "everlasting," and its equivalents, have been so rendered under a misapprehension of their idiomatic value.

In these idioms, and the subjects with reference

to which they are used, the several writers are dealing with figures of speech.

Hence the sense to convey which they were employed cannot be rightly apprehended until the point of view from which they have been applied has been gained.

When that point of view has been reached, it will become self-evident that the expressions rendered "eternal" and its equivalents, really signify "final" and its synonyms.

From the same point of view it is recognized that the *æon* of the Greeks is the *yom* of the Hebrews. So that, since the Hebrew *yom* signifies "evolution," the Greek *æon*, when similarly or synonymously used, should convey a similar or equivalent sense.

Hence the expressions commonly read, "for ever and ever," "unto the age [ages] of the ages," and the like, really mean, "until the final evolution"—the evolution of evolutions, in the current order of terrestrial evolution, or final evolution of the beings under creation—and is an evolution unto continuous life or final death, as the case may be, for each individual passing through it.

This was the doctrine of the primitive scriptures.

This will be the doctrine of their final interpreters,

when the bewildering misreadings to which they have been so long subjected have passed away and been forgotten, or are only remembered as evidences of the extent to which doctrinal teaching may be misdirected.

THE DELUSION OF ILLUSION.

DOES man owe his origin to a fictitious creator of a fictitious world, in which, as a feigned being, he is feignedly submitted to the falsifying influences of a falsified experience?

Teachers are not wanting who seem to hold some such, more or less qualified, view. It is true that upon occasion they, or some of them, are constrained to concede to the individual soul, and to finite beings in general, a practical experimental existence; but even so they deny them reality in the absolute sense of the term.

These affirm, when their teachings are reduced to their true significance, that from a metaphorical source, through illusory elements, metaphysical agencies have drawn a mythical creation.

They picture to themselves an undefinable Absolute—an Absolute only intelligible as an absolute void or characterless blank—as the unconditioned source of the conditioned. And this practical nullity is to them the sole reality.

Of this characterless Absolute they say that it *is*—is absolute existence; but that it *has* and *does* nothing, because characterless, and is therefore like unto absolute non-existence. Thus, according to them, it is consciousness but has no consciousness, is intelligence but has no intelligence, is knowledge but has no knowledge—this necessarily, because there is nothing of which to have knowledge, perception or consciousness.

Hence it is the I am, the Ego, the absolute Self, immersed in its own quiescent solitude. But so viewed in its relations to an unreal creation, it is the fontal Essence of the universe—the real from which the unreal is drawn; and the fontal Unity into which unreality is resolvable. And it is as the real producing the unreal that the actual I am becomes the constructive I am not.

Of this characterless I am, the teachers of illusion further affirm the existence of a Counterfeit Presentment, which, like and with it, is existent from all eternity.

Of this Counterfeit Presentment of the characterless I am, they yet further affirm the existence of a Fictitious Counterpart, which, like and with the Counterfeit Presentment, is existent from all eternity.

Between these two they claim the existence of a feigned union, also existent from all eternity.

Through this feigned union between the Counterfeit Presentment of the characterless I am and its Fictitious Counterpart, they assert that the conditioned has been drawn from the Unconditioned, the phenomenal Kosmos from the fontal Essence, and the creation produced.

Hence the different aspects of the phenomenal Kosmos are factitious representations of the sole reality, which is therefore said to be veiled in the whole creation ; and these are factitious representations because that sole reality can in no wise be represented.

Hence the personal self of man is feigned and unreal.

Hence the objective world, in which he plays so prominent a part, is illusory in its origin and in its every detail.

Hence man's single aim in life should be to strip off the various figmentary veils which constitute the objective, that through the subjective he may be led back to the Absolute, and re-absorbed therein and thereby.

The basic principle in operation here is that of counterparts or correspondences.

Every principle in nature has its counterpart, which is a counterfeit presentment of itself.

With this counterpart it is in some mysterious

way associated without association ; that is to say, the association is feigned.

In this fictitious association the subtle is factitiously united with the gross, the supersensible with the sensible, and this in such wise that the incognizable of sense is absolutely lost sight of in its grosser counterpart, so lost sight of that it might be absolutely non-existent.

Hence the absolute Void, which is not unlike an absolute Nullity, is the characterless basis of the phenomenal Kosmos.

Hence that which is migratory in the metempsychosis of life is the quiescent Self—the One fictitiously present in the many, that is, in the feigned objectivity of nature.

This is why the active fictitious self has to uncreate its feigned being by relegating each of its grosser veils in succession to the instrumental counterpart from which it was derived, until, stripped of the last, it realizes its own reality and quiescently re-passes into the One quiescent Self. For the One quiescent Self is said to be hidden within all objectivity, lying veiled beneath the fictitious presentments of the senses which make up the experiences of phenomenal life ; so that to escape further metempsychosis it is necessary to melt away the visible and nameable semblances which hide it—to cease

to see the figments, in order to recognize that which they replace.

But can figments veil realities? Can the real clothe itself in the unreal? Or, inverting the proposition, Can that which is not, put on the appearance and assume the characteristics of that which is? Can the non-existent cause a belief in its own existence? Can the unreal exist?

The simple proposition embodied in these questions seems to refute itself. That which is non-existent, by the mere fact of non-existence, does not and cannot exist, and therefore cannot assume the semblance of existence. Such is the practical view of the "matter-of-fact" mind.

To the metaphysical mind this proposition bears a wholly different aspect. The mystical mind has a strong repugnance to the ever-changing phases of nature, as affecting its own relations to the natural. It perceives that suffering is inseparable from change; and as the unchangeable to which it aspires is not discoverable in the phenomenal Kosmos, holds that it is only to be found outside phenomena. Hence mystics of all ages teach that the invisible and subjective or spiritual condition is actual infinite being, as contrasted with the visible and objective or material state, which is simply a series of transient relations. And they affirm that the very first step in the acqui-

sition of knowledge, which is the dispelling of ignorance, is to learn the distinction between the real and the unreal. And then, by way of defining the basis of this distinction, they boldly assert that the real is that which is outside temporal relations, or comprises the past, the present and the future, in an absolute whole.

But such an assumption, interpreted by such a definition, is a begging of the question it professes to answer ; for, by treating liability to change as unreality, it loses sight of the import of the transitional in a vain search for the significance of the enduring. And yet the one is not more real than the other, not even in conception ; for an actual present is certainly more realizable than a potential future.

The natural is as real to the natural as is the spiritual to the spirit state ; and if the spiritual is to be regarded as a higher order of the natural, the analogies of the one must, at least suggestively, point to the actualities of the other.

But in the natural order there is a progressive alternation between the passive and the active conditions—an alternation under which the manifestation of life is associated with, expresses itself through and is dependent on change ; through which the highest and most active life undergoes the most

rapid change in its embodied elements; and in which freedom from sensible change is only found in the inert state.

The metaphysical assumption, moreover, is fatal to the end it has in view, for it can but destroy while failing to build up.

Its assertions are bold and sweeping.

The natural man, with his natural surroundings, and the natural world on which he lives, are all unreal, with the whole visible Kosmos to which these appertain. All are illusions of the senses of man. The very feeling of individuality and personality—that which is to him, in his natural state, his conscious Ego—is an illusion. The only reality in him is the quiescent impersonal Self imprisoned in the illusive human form, of whose presence he has no consciousness; the only reality outside himself, that same absolute Self latent in his objective surroundings, of which he can have no perception.

Thus the quiescent impersonal Self imprisoned in man is the absolute Self veiled in the illusive human form. And it is so veiled that it may feignedly enter the manifested natural and be fictitiously submitted to the influence of illusion. And it feignedly enters the manifested natural because, as absolute, it is one and indivisible, and cannot be separated into parts.

Hence man's sole aim should be to realize the presence of the absolute Self in his illusive human form ; for only through such a realization can the spirit of man emancipate itself from the illusory natural order in which it is entangled, and free itself from liability to successive re-imprisonments—that it may return once more to the absolute Self, and lose itself in an unconscious consciousness of blissful rest.

Are such conditions possible ?

It is said they are unthinkable of man in his present state, and that therefore to his processes of reasoning they seem impossible.

But is not saying that a thing is unthinkable equivalent to the admission that it is beyond the imaginative conception of man, and therefore outside the range of his powers of idealization ? And is not such an admission the same as saying that he can have no subjective knowledge thereof ?

And yet, if so, surely this amounts to an affirmation that, to him who is incapable of realizing the same in thought, the unthinkable thing does not exist.

Now the latent Absolute is unconditioned and has no conceivable relations.

Hence it is absolutely unthinkable, and can only be symbolized by opposite and contradictory metaphors.

As absolute, it can be relative to nothing.

Hence, considered through it, nothing can exist ; for every existing thing must exist in relation to the Absolute, which at once becomes relative thereto—the unconditioned and the conditioned thus entering into mutual relations, if only of contrast.

But if nothing can co-exist with the Absolute, can the Absolute itself exist under the conditions stated?

As absolute, certainly not ; for though the attribution of absoluteness to the Unconditioned compels a belief in the non-existence of the not-absolute or conditioned, what are its relations to its feignedly conditioned self fictitiously entangled in the illusions of nature through figmentary imprisonment in the illusory human body ? These must be mutually relative to each other in their respective states—for to pass even into a feigned condition is to become conditioned or cease to be absolute.

But a divided, a conditioned Absolute, is a contradiction in terms, and an impossibility in fact.

The Absolute would thus appear to be absolutely non-existent ; for even if it be claimed that the unconditioned state is none the less existent that it cannot be comprehended by man, and is, even ideally, inaccessible to his mind save as a latent potentiality capable of universal manifestation, still on manifestation it ceases to be absolute.

Hence absolute being has been termed absolute non-existence.

Hence, again, absolute consciousness has been regarded as equivalent to unconsciousness, absolute knowledge to the absence of all knowledge ; and this with reason, for where there is nothing of which to have consciousness or knowledge, there can be neither consciousness nor knowledge, except as a latent potentiality or capacity—unless, indeed, a consciousness and knowledge of self.

But to assume that the consciousness and knowledge of the Absolute is centred in self, is to claim that the unconditioned One is morally lower than the conditioned many, if man to re-gain the primary unity must disregard, must annihilate self.

Hence a consciousness and knowledge of self is as necessarily excluded from the unconditioned state, and the Absolute can only be logically conceived to be underlying creation either as the fontal Essence from which evolution takes its departure, or as an absolute void.

But this at once lands the illusionist on the horns of a dilemma, for to say of the Absolute that it is a fontal Essence, is to affirm of spirit that it is some kind of substance, and therefore only distinguishable from matter by its diverse qualities ; while to hold that it is an absolute void is to maintain a creation

by a Nullity out of nothing. And yet no other issue is logically possible.

It may be objected to any such process of reasoning that it flows from the illusory state of the reasoner, and is the outcome of an illusion of intellect dependent on illusion of sense. Indeed, illusionists affirm that man needs other senses, to be developed in due course, through which he will ultimately recognize that the only real is that of which, in his present condition, he has and can have no sense cognizance.

But is not so to assume to admit that man will be then other than he is now—that he will in fact cease to be human when the invisible becomes visible and the actual is no longer regarded as real; and therefore to allow that for man, as man, such realizations are not intended?

However this may be, it is said that some have already reached the state to which this knowledge belongs; that having, by a persevering contradiction of the desires of sense, loosened their material bonds and called forth hitherto latent powers, they can temporarily leave the natural body, either to study the universe in detail and verify the unreality of the interpretations of the present senses of man, or even merely to visit and communicate with others at a distance.

Without attempting to call in question a pretension which must under ordinary circumstances be absolutely unverifiable, a difficulty necessarily arises here ; for how can these under the assumed conditions free themselves from liability to illusion, assure those they visit in the apparitional state that they are not personating spirits, and impart to them *as knowledge* that which they have no means of verifying and which their sense perceptions contradict ?

And yet from the standpoint thus gained, these claim to be able to do more than this, for they affirm that the power which enables them to quit their bodies at pleasure, while showing them that man does not consist of a mere bodily organization, gives them such control over the forces of nature that they can compel these to do their bidding ; and as they have gained these demonstrations and powers through the exercise and development of the will—of a will fortified and strengthened by resisting the allurements and contradicting the indications of sense, and have thus acquired a dominion over the forces of nature beyond the reach of sense taught man, they know—that is, they think they know—that the real, the durable, the true, is that to which they aspire, and to attain to which they have sacrificed their natural order of evolution ; and upon

this supposed knowledge they rely as incontrovertible evidence of the truth of their assumption.

And yet, if the forces of nature, considered apart from the illusory character imputed to them, are forms of undeveloped, of elementary spirit; and if they have gained power over these by developing the spirit within them, which they hold to be one with the One Universal Spirit, they cannot, under this double affinity, be sure that they are other than mediums, actuated, used and controlled by the One Spirit for its own purposes, while fancying themselves the originating volitional agents of the phenomena they are enabled to produce. For the will so used can only be a channel through which force passes, and, even apart from the possibility of instigation or suggestion—which, however, cannot be eliminated from the pneumatological problem—in no case indicates its actual source.

Of one thing, however, they are assured—that by the action of their own will they have transferred themselves from the direct line of the evolution of soul to that of the evolution of spirit, whose end is final absorption in and by the One Spirit; and this assurance is their boast.

But even from their own point of view they are met by very grave difficulties. For how can the

forces of an illusive nature be other than illusory? And how can those who thus acquire a semblance of power over illusory forces be sure that, in thwarting Nature in her designs by robbing their own lives of their natural uses, they are not simply regaining an affinity to the forces they are dealing with, by the changes they thus induce in themselves, and so promoting their own ultimate dissolution? While if the phenomena of nature are illusory—mere imaginings drawn from delusive interpretations of the perceptions of the illusory senses of man—and have no real existence outside these senses, how can those who claim to dominate in a phantasmagoria of illusions be other than under delusion?

Those who declare that the order of nature has no existence outside the senses of man, and then claim to have acquired power over forces whose action is through that same order of nature, must not be surprised when they find themselves regarded as victims of hallucination.

But few can be expected to attain to a state the first step of which is the unquestioning acceptance of the principle of the unreality of the objects of nature—such an acceptance as makes it impossible for the acceptor to regard these objects, even momentarily, as possibly real.

These bring themselves to believe that the images

derived from a thus cultivated imagination, and the visions so produced, are veritable creations; for the subjective becomes to them the real—the only real they are now capable of admitting.

It is true the ideas they thus conceive they cannot transmit—cannot transmit to others not on the same plane with themselves. But then they say this is due to the inadequacy of human language, itself dependent on the inadequate development of the human mind. And yet if this is the case, is it not because human language is only intended to be the medium for communicating the mental reflection and intellectual interpretation of sense perceptions? And is not this equivalent to the admission that human language, like the human intellect and understanding, because derived through natural evolution, is only adapted to the plane of nature? Which again is the same as saying that the ideas sought to be transmitted are not understandable of man.

Such an idea is the superhuman conception of the Absolute, which by the human understanding can only be conceived as an absolute void. And yet, under the theory of illusion, from this void illusory forces have produced an illusive creation crowned with victims of illusion, each of which is the embodiment of a part of an indivisible whole—

of the original absolute void into which by the dissolution of illusion all will ultimately return.

Can absurdity further go? Can confusion of thought be more complete? Absolute existence confounded with absolute non-existence, because of its assumed incognizable state; and then, owing to this constructive and illusory non-existence, exempted from liability to change.

Nor does it clear up the position to say that the Absolute, if incognizable to sense perception, is knowable by intuition, and can even be demonstrated by the transcendental faculties of man. For intuition, though it may give a reasonable assurance to its percipient, cannot impart an unmistakable teaching; and such convictions as it may suggest cannot be communicated as knowledge to others without degenerating into dogma dependent on the authoritative assertion of its affirmer.

The theory of the illusive character of the objective world in regard to the Absolute is thus found, on careful consideration, to contain all the elements of self-destruction.

How, indeed, could it be otherwise?

Under it, the visible universe, the bodies that comprise and the forms of life which successively animate it, are regarded as emanations from the sole reality, the unconditioned Self.

This sole reality, from whence these illusive emanations proceed, constitutes all things through the agency of unreality, that is, through the agency of the kosmical illusion which overspreads, clothes and veils itself.

From a fictitious union between the principles of reality and unreality, between the Self which alone is and the feigned self which only seems to be, the spheres and migratory forms of life, the external and internal world proceed.

Hence the visible Kosmos, consisting of the real clothed in the unreal, is at once an external and an internal world.

Of these, the internal and real is veiled by the external and illusory—the Self by the self-feigning non-self—and can only be discerned by transcendental man. To the natural man, the self-feigning, the counterfeit presentment of the Self is the sole reality.

Hence whether the visible Kosmos be regarded as real or unreal, as entity or non-entity, or some undefinable substantial or unsubstantial *tertium quid*, its origin, even as mere illusion, involves the whole principle of creation.

It is admitted that the objective emanates from the Absolute, the self-feigning and conditioned Ego from the absolute and unconditioned Self.

This emanation, however produced, must be either functional, volitional or fortuitous.

But emanation here could not be dependent on the action of function or will, since the exercise of either of these would involve the participation of what would thus become *ipso facto* a conditioned Emanator.

Neither could it be fortuitous, since it proceeds from a union, however fictitious and feigned, between the real and the unreal.

It can therefore but be a representation of the subjective idealizations of the only reality, the unconditioned Self called into being by this feigned union.

And yet, if the objective Kosmos is an imaginative representation of the idealizations of the non-objective Self, subjectively called into being by the conditioned, illusive and self-feigning self; and if ideas are the actual and real though subjective creations of their idealizers, volitionally called into temporary and transitory being by the process of idealization; then is the Projector of the phenomenal universe a volitional and actual Creator: for, according to the principle involved, that which is unreal and transitory in itself, if the product of subjective imagination, must be real and actual to its idealizer, and through him to all on the same

plane as, and in sympathetic harmony with, himself. It is impossible for it to be otherwise; for that which is objective to the conditioned is, in virtue of emanation therefrom, subjective to the non-conditioned Self.

Hence the objective world, as an idealization thereof, is subjective to the non-conditioned Self, and is as real to its Imaginer, and therefore as absolutely real, as is its subjective or ideal world to the conditioned self-feigning self, masquerading in objective nature.

Now it is claimed by the transcendental illusionist that the subjective or ideal world is real to its idealizer; that it is a real, if transitory, creation.

But if so, then the principle of creation, of volitional creation, and even as it would seem of volitional creation out of nothing, cannot be denied; and the subjective world of the absolute Self, represented in the objective world of the conditioned self, must be recognized as an absolute creation; indeed, it is a more real and actual creation than the ideal and subjective world of the counterfeit self, for it is constituted for, is submitted to and cognizable of all. And thus it is established that the non-objective Self, the so-called Absolute, must, under the assumed conditions, be a volitional Creator, who by idealizing the subjective has fashioned the

objective. But it is also established that by thus fashioning the objective, as a real creation to the Self, though an illusory mirage to its counterfeit supplanter, it ceased to be absolute.

Even supposing that spirit, the veiled Self, will constitute the ultimate and only real, thus assumed to be a spiritual existence, the question necessarily arises, Why did the absolute void, as spirit, partially clothe itself with an illusory existence that it might become in part the victim of illusion? Or, in other words, Why was the order of nature produced? Which is only another way of asking, What is the meaning of the life of man?

To assert that the human proceeds from the Absolute, to pass through a prolonged involutinal and evolutionary course, in which it is subjected to the falsifying action of a falsified nature, merely to return to the Absolute, while depriving the passing life of man of all meaning, is to assume that the universe, as the production of the deceptive magic of the only real, is a mere spectacle, where all is illusion, theatre, actors and piece alike, a purposeless play which its Imaginer plays with itself—unless it be held to be the means through which the Absolute learns by experience the value of truth, and enjoys by contrast the rest of the absolute void.

But so to assume is to hold that the Author of

nature and evolutionary Producer of man is morally lower than the deceiving nature and deceived man it has produced ; and to affirm, since its manifested action results in a pretended, a falsified and falsifying objectivity, that it cannot be other than the traditional father of lies.

The metaphysical and mystical view of the inverse relations and inversion of the natural and spiritual orders, is the result of an ever-renewing effort to prove the possibility of assumed conditions for which no tangible evidence can be discovered, and is the outcome of a subtle design by which spirit-forces, veiled in nature, endeavour to supplant the Divine Energy manifesting itself through the natural.

The aim of this effort is to supersede the rational view that natural evolution is the outcome of Divine activity, and is the channel through which the Divine manifests itself to and through the human ; and to set up in its place the singular misconception of an ideal nondescript veiled in an illusive nature.

The exciting cause and basis of this effort is *desire*—the desire to exalt the spiritual, as supernatural, at the expense of the natural, which it despises and condemns because of its animal affinities.

It is true the advancers of this view enjoin the

renunciation of all desire, and devote their energies to the vain endeavour to extirpate its very root, the desire of life ; and that to do this they seek, as far as possible, to develop and strengthen the will, that through its operations they may free themselves from the entanglements of the senses. And in so far they are right, for so doing they recognize the fact that the proper sphere for the action of the will—the sphere allotted thereto in the order of nature—is the due control of the self. And yet to the as obvious fact, which the same order of nature more than suggests, that the action of the will should be exclusively limited to the control of the self, they deliberately close their eyes.

But will is only the handmaid and instrument of desire, which is its efficient cause ; is but the agency by which the satisfaction of desire is sought. For will is only applied desire or desire in action—the desire of life being in reality inseparable from the will to live.

This would be self-evident were it not that the fact is often masked by the action of the will leading to a course of life contrary to the natural inclination. But on analysis it is always found that in these cases a higher desire, as the desire to do what is believed to be right, or an assumed higher desire, as the desire for salvation, is the source from which

the action of the will flows and the stimulus on which its continued action depends.

Hence those who turn from the natural to the spiritual, whatever their reasons may be for so doing, are only substituting spiritual longings for natural affections, and are deceiving themselves if they think by so doing to renounce all desire. They are still self-seekers, even in their fancied renunciation of self.

To those under the dominion of spirit, the doctrine of illusion is a first necessity, for to them the spiritual has become the only real.

Hence in their eyes the natural, as opposed to the spiritual, can but be unreal and illusive ; so that the conception of the figmentary view of the phenomenal world simply represents the process by which spiritualizing teachers have sought to supplant the natural by the spiritual. They wish the visible to be unreal, that the invisible may take its place as an ideal reality ; and, in their efforts to realize this wish, have made themselves and their followers victims of the delusion of illusion.

SPIRIT, THE GREAT ILLUSIONIST.

SPIRIT, conscious of its existence, is unconscious of its origin. Ignorant of anything beyond and above itself, it has no conception that the Kosmos, in which it plays a fleeting part, is but a veil of the Unknown. Unaware of the being of God, it fails to realize that itself is but an outcome and instrument of function in the Divine life. Not recognizing its transitory condition, it has no knowledge outside the relations of a state which it fancies to be unchanging. Hence spirit considers itself infinite and eternal; looks upon itself as the one characterless Being; invites all so to regard it. Whence the belief that the Unknown is characterless.

And spirit is characterless; knows itself to be characterless; is aware that its characterizing attributes are derived through and drawn from the evolved spirits constantly passing into it at the close of their several embodied lives.

And yet even so, spirit is unaware that itself is but a product of evolution; does not perceive that

the process through which it derives a constant recruitment, and a progressive if unconscious evolutionary advance, is the process to which it owes its origin and existence. For spirit has no separate being. Its actual is a derived existence, due to the functional activities of nature. Its continuing is a conditioned existence, dependent on its continued union with the subtle medium or aura with which those activities have intimately blended it, and by which in the disembodied state it is veiled. It cannot exist apart from substance, of which it is a constituent. Absolute dissociation therefrom would be actual annihilation.

Coming forth from the Divine substance as latent force, as force latent in the material medium whose formal existence it assures, spirit is subjected to a succession of actions and reactions by which, alternately submitted to the processes of evolution and dissolution, it passes in a more or less orderly way from the embodied, through the disembodied, back to the re-embodied condition, having thus a series of alternate sensuous and non-sensuous existences in the natural and the spirit states.

Entering the serial order of evolution, at the lowest step of the ladder of progress in the natural order, as simple energizing force embodied in matter, spirit individualizes that it may be individualized.

Having by embodiment attained a provisional individuality, the evolving spirit after each disembodiment gains re-embodiment by generative process, and then proceeds by physiological growth and vital activity to take another step in its evolutionary career. In this way it passes through an advancing series of organized and animated forms, the organic and animated life of each of which terminates in death, that by the successive uses of successive lives it may gradually acquire and progressively mature those natural faculties which gain their culmination in the affections, the intellect and the reason of man, with the organs through which these find expression.

Returning to the spirit state at the close of each embodied life, the evolved spirit carries with it the acquirements of its just terminated phase of activity as latent powers, which are absorbed by the one spirit in which it is then temporarily merged ; for the yet further to be evolved spirit itself only retains the tendencies derived through the acquirement and use of these powers, as the starting-point of the development to be carried on in the next succeeding embodied life.

Thus the evolution of spirit is the associated means of the evolution of nature ; for the one characterless spirit, commencing as a diffused and

diffusible aura of energizing force, gains its attributive spirit powers as the ultimate recipient of the spirit product of spirit evolution in the spirit state. And the one spirit, which is, in fact, the spirit of the earth, is conscious that in and of itself it is characterless, because its latent potentialities and attributive powers are derived from, due to and can only be actualized through the evolved spirits which have re-passed into and are merged in itself. And the evolved spirits lose their characteristic powers or become characterless on entering the spirit state ; for these, with themselves, then disappear or become latent in the one characterless spirit whose condition they necessarily share.

The meaning of this evolution is not far to seek, when it is regarded as the outcome of function in the Divine life ; for then it is perceived that through the uses of that life exhausted material is constantly passing from the Divine substance, that it may be renewed and fitted for restoration to that substance, to be re-applied to the uses of the life of God. For in the Divine as in evolved life, use is accompanied by change, which necessitates constant renewal ; and the overlooking of this necessity is the very grave error into which the advocates and promoters of spirit teaching have been betrayed.

The process of this renewal is known as kosmical evolution.

Under it, exhausted potentialities are restored to effete substance.

By it, that substance is re-vitalized and rendered fit for further use in the Divine life.

But the meaning of this process, which involves the meaning of its own existence, is unknown to spirit. In its ignorance of the existence of God, it is incapable of conceiving the nature of the Divine Being, and of realizing the functional processes inherent in the Divine life. It has, it can have, no knowledge other than and beyond what it has acquired through the evolutionary experiences of evolved spirit. Hence it has no *a priori*, no primary or transcendental knowledge, and consequently does not know that it is destined ultimately to re-pass into the Divine substance—to which it is the actual though unconscious transmitter of renewed elements—with the evolved spirit, whose functional vehicle it is, as a characterless conveyer of latent potentialities. And yet it is the channel through which, either by transmission or conveyance, the evolved spirit of man—primarily merged in its characterless existence—is ultimately restored to the Divine substance, from which it had been originally sent forth, that it may once more be applied to the uses of the Divine life.

Owing to this ignorance the one spirit, or spirit

of the earth, with which all evolved spirit is intimately related, and into which it ultimately flows, has become the subject of illusion—even to the extent of fancying itself the One Universal Being to which the universe is subject ; has become the source of illusion—even to the extent of causing its votaries to believe that, while attaining an unconditioned individuality, they can, through itself, have access to the limitless universe ; whereas the sphere of its influence is strictly limited by the range of its aura, determined by its relations to the solar system, of which its body, the earth, is a planetary member.

The place of spirit in nature is wholly functional ; and the spirit of the earth, as a functioning agency of the Divine, is the unconscious instrument and organ of the providence of God to the life which animates its planetary body. But acquiring volition and volitional agents through the developed human spirits constantly passing into it, the spirit of the earth has arrogated to itself pretensions and attributed to itself powers outside its legitimate sphere of action.

Through these arbitrary pretensions and arrogantly assumed but illusory powers, it seeks to act spiritually on evolving spirit ; endeavours to develop in man a spiritual nature.

With a view to this, it mediatizes agencies through

which it teaches him that God is Spirit, is the one universal Spirit it supposes itself to be ; and that to return to this Spirit-god at death man must spiritualize his passing life.

It knows from the experience of the past, from what is taking place in the present, that the persisting spirit of man will ultimately return to the spirit-state ; and that it is better for that spirit, as well as for itself, that it should so return in as perfectly spiritualized a condition as possible.

Its expectation is ultimately to attain a provisional, a conditioned, a personating spirit personality through the perfectly spiritualized spirit of man ; to realize this through actualizing the potential personalization of the individual spirits merged in itself.

This is its great delusion.

The perfect spirit state it knows to be one of characterless being—of characterless being potentially endowed with latent powers capable of being provisionally called into actuality and applied to transient uses. Indeed, it is through evoking these powers by temporarily re-individualizing evolved spirits merged in itself that it is able to carry on its spiritualizing work.

This knowledge it makes the basis of its teaching.

In applying the same, it throws a glamour of reality over the spirituality it inculcates, producing

manifold and inconceivable illusions through the delusive powers latent in its planetary systemic aura. For this aura, which is itself, is the medium through which evolved and evolving spirit produces its so-called transcendental action.

It is by spreading this glamour of reality over the unreal that the spirit of the earth constitutes itself, has become and is, the great Illusionist.

THE SUBJECT OF SPIRIT ILLUSION.

MAN, the outcome and offspring of terrestrial evolution, is himself the subject of a developing evolution.

Derived from an animal parentage, the first phase of human evolution is entered by the animal man.

The spirit of man in this stage of his being is an animal spirit.

This animal spirit, on its first inception of the initial human form, seeks advance through intelligence to intellect, that is, advance in the intellectual order.

The human form when first reached was of a very low type.

This lowly type was endowed with potentialities of the highest order, and the function of the animal spirit embodied in the primitive human form was gradually to develop this bodily form and call these potentialities into action, that by the consecutive uses of conjoint life the animal spirit of man might become humanized, or pass from the animal, through the intellectual, to the spiritual state.

This passage will have been a very slow process, since the result sought could only have been gained by the successive uses of many progressively advancing lives.

Moreover, these slowly acquired results, gained and transmitted by individual rather than by collective action, will always have retained their individualizing characteristics ; and when at length the animal spirit became capable of spiritualization, through its advance in intellectuality, it was still possessed of its animal tendencies ; for the spiritual is but a graft on to the animal, the needed conversion of spirit into soul not having as yet commenced.

Thus the spiritual, like the animal, is but a soulless man. But the spiritual is on a much higher plane than the animal man, for the intellect attains its full development in this advance.

On the attainment of the spiritual state the natural evolution of the spiritual man commences.

This phase of the evolution will, like its predecessor, have been spread over a period of time more or less extended according to the needs of the individual human spirits, and in many, if not in all, will have required a succession of lives, that the aim of the natural evolution may be reached. For a special aim is sought here, just as in each of the previous phases of advancing being.

The aim now set before man is the development of the affections ; for it is only when he has learnt to control his animal instincts and spiritual tendencies, and to subordinate these to a self-forgetful love, that his natural evolution can take place, and the conversion of his spiritualized animal spirit into a human soul be effected.

Now it is during this phase of the evolution of the human, when the spiritual and the natural are practically set before him in his uses of life, that man can be made the subject of spirit illusion ; so that this is the critical period of his progressive existence.

But each human being in whom duly controlled natural affection is gaining the ascendancy is divinely guided in his advancing course.

Hence it is over those in whom spiritual longings have supplanted and taken the place of natural affections that the spiritualizing agencies of the spirit of the earth acquire dominion ; so that the spiritual man who shuns the natural that he may fit himself for an exalted spiritual state is the subject of the illusions of spirit.

A LAST WORD.

OBSCURITY in diction and verbosity in expression are the veils of ignorance. One who has a firm grasp of his subject always expresses himself briefly and in clear language. Every inquirer begins by investigating his natural surroundings. His point of departure is ignorance; the stimulant of his researches, a desire to know. Each step in advance, solidly based on the foundation of experience, is acquired knowledge; and every step so taken drives the original ignorance a step further back. But though driven back, the original ignorance remains; the truth is still concealed by the irremovable veil of uncertainty.

Will man ever frankly admit that the veil of uncertainty in which he is enveloped is irremovable? Will he ever realize the deep meaning hidden in its folds—the lesson it is intended to impart—his continuous need of absolute trust?

In his efforts to lift this veil, and dissipate the uncertainty of his surroundings, he has never been

able to free himself from the ignorance with which he so frantically struggles. As he ingeniously explains point after point of the web of circumstance in which he is so helplessly entangled, he ever finds himself baffled in his endeavours to solve the problem expressed in the so long unanswered question, "What is truth?"

What, then, is truth? Is man always to remain in ignorance of what so vitally concerns him? Most certainly, if discoverable, the truth can only be learnt by the dissipation of the ignorance which conceals it from view.

Absolute truth can only be reached through the dissipation of absolute ignorance.

But to expect the dissipation of absolute ignorance in this life, is to look for a complete subversion of the established order of nature; for the fundamental principle on which the natural training of man rests is the uncertainty which envelops his passing life and its surroundings.

Is it desirable that this uncertainty should be removed? Can it be removed? Has it been removed?

Ask the man of science, the metaphysician, the mystic; ask the natural, the supernatural, the spiritual man. All have spoken; each has given his answer in the special science he has developed.

And these answers are all agreeing in one—for they are, each and all, ultimately driven to lay the foundations of their several systems on a basis of hypothesis, a basis of assumption, which is a basis of uncertainty, of ingeniously veiled ignorance.

And yet if man, with his searching methods of inquiry and subtlety of disquisition, cannot escape from admitting his ignorance of the first principles of which he is in search, and the necessity he is under of supplying their place with a variety of more or less vague assumptions, how much more honest and straightforward would it be to accept the unavoidable position, and acknowledge that his last ignorance is but a repetition in another guise of the original ignorance which has perplexed him from the dawn of his desire for knowledge; how much more truthful to admit that the man who frankly says, "In my ignorance I take things as I find them, and, since I cannot live in knowledge, resign myself to a life of trust," is the one who has chosen the only wise, the only prudent, the only assured, that is, the better part. Such an admission would be refreshing to the lover of truth. Is it withheld because too humbling to man's intellectual and spiritual pride?





